

**MINUTES OF THE COLLIER COUNTY
EAST OF 951 AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING**

Naples, Florida, February 20, 2024

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Collier County East of 951 in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 7:00 PM in REGULAR SESSION at the Heritage Bay Government Services Center, 15450 Collier Blvd., Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

Mark Teaters, Sr., Chairman
Robert Raines, Vice Chair
Michael Ramsey
Christina Aguilera (via Zoom)
Rae Ann Burton (alternate)
Kim Ellis
Aaron Zwiefel (not present)

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Led by Parker Klopf.

2. **Roll Call:** Quorum established.

3. **Approval of the Minutes from Previous Meeting:**

Mark Teaters: Motion made to approve the minutes; Robert Raines seconds.
Approved unanimously.

4. **Approval of the Agenda:**

Amendment to the agenda—Adding Justin Damiano, Director, Government Affairs, Comcast, as Item 5.B.

Kim Ellis: Approval of the agenda with the amendment; Mark Teaters seconds.
Approved unanimously.

Comment from Kim Ellis about the 911 calls that are being dropped. Parker will give Kim the packet, presentation, and minutes to her. An amendment to the cell phone towers is in process.

5. **(A) Greater Naples Fire District Presentation and Discussion**

Nolan Sapp, Fire Chief

- Retiring as Fire Chief

- Cell towers plague the fire department as well; it is amazing how much the technology drives what we do in the fire service – reduces response time; gives us information; real time data; and information that needs to be discreet such as medical information which must be transmitted through the MDP's; constantly looking for ways to enhance.
- Transitioning away from Verizon to AT&T.
- The fire district owns the tower at Station 71 – which we lease out. To drive to the Estates, the average time is 18-20 minutes.
- A new fire station is being built at the corner of DeSoto BLVD S in Golden Gate Estates. It is being built for the future with growth in mind. In an average year, the call volume is about 1,800 – 1,900 calls in a five-mile driving radius of that intersection and will continue to grow as the population moves to the east. The potential for wildfire to occur is more dramatic today.
- All the apparatus has been purchased out of impact fees –the engine, water tenders, brush truck, EMS/ambulance, etc. The station to be built is about \$12M and breaking ground will be soon.
- Staff will be about 12 total.
- A cell tower is slated to go on site which will provide enhanced communication for not only the county, but the community as well.
- We will have fuel tank capability which will reduce the number of trips coming back into town or at least to Wilson Blvd.
- Emergency Management will be able to work out of the station for instances such as a hurricane; move our resources further inland to protect them from flooding and water damage.
- Once this station is built, people that live in the Estates may now be in the five-mile range requirement for homeowners' insurance.
- We continue to look for an avenue to have fire hydrants in the Estates and that has been for the last 20 years; due to national security (terrorism, such as putting poison in the system) we have not been successful. We need a secure hydrant system. Putting in a loop is not cost conducive.
- We use forestry helicopters. The Sheriff's Department has a helicopter, a Huey from the Vietnam War era. They outfitted it with a Bambi bucket. Their source of water is any canal that has water deep enough.
- Brush trucks carry between 100 to 700 gallons of water.

Mark Teaters: To help us with our program, can you get us a list of where water is available for the fire department? This will help when we move forward with a hydrant system. (Yes – will send to Parker.)

- We are currently in the middle of heart attack season when all the tourists come down; then we roll into the brush fire season; then hurricane season.
- The Forestry is enhancing and adding some additional equipment. The new station has a new brush truck and is ready for an inspection on Monday.
- We purchased land in the White Lake area to build a training center, logistics and fleet facility. That is slated for the near future.
- A roadway that the county is proposing will run off Blackburn Road down below the landfill and will hook up to Wilson Blvd.

- We're excited for the county to build a bridge on 10th off Everglades Blvd. between DeSoto and Everglades. That will increase our response time significantly.
- There's also talk that the County Commissioners are going to Washington D.C. to petition the Department of Transportation to open the Everglades BLVD S exchange so that the residents out there can have access on and off the Interstate. This will give them another avenue for escape during the wildfire and additional relief from traffic conditions.
- There were five bridges approved; Forestry bought two new helicopters but those are subject to anywhere in the state.
- District-wide we have a lot of projects going on; 1,512 square miles, which is the largest special fire district in the state of Florida. We run 16 stations, 17 with the new station ready to be built. We average 30-31,000 calls a year out of those 16 stations; 68% medical call load – unlike North Collier [Fire District] that runs at 85-90%. The remainder is commercial brush fire, interstate incidents, etc.
- We are fighting with the state of Florida to revamp the way we are reimbursed for the station on I-75 at the 63-mile marker. They reimbursed them to a certain threshold of \$1.4 million. That does not cover the cost of that station today. In June of 2027, they are not going to pay us anything – stop funding – and we must come up with the funding mechanism.
- We are not allowed to go north or south of the interstate into the National Park because you must have certain credentials to step foot in there; you can't use any machinery; there is no tax base to pay for that station. They expect Greater Naples to pay a \$2M annual budget. We are trying to get that changed.
- Wildland firefighting is a unique craft, and it all must be run through what's called the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, which is housed in Boise, ID, and the local agency that has jurisdiction by statute; overall wildland fires is the Florida Forestry Service. They govern a lot of the regulations, and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group in conjunction with the Florida Forestry Service put in strict guidelines on what courses you must take and the ability for you to teach those courses is highly restricted and governed, for various reasons, mostly because of liability.
- When we had the last large wildfire incident, we had fire departments that wanted to come into the area but because they were not trained in wildland firefighting, they could not assist due to liability. We must pull from agencies throughout the state, and we pull some from South Carolina and Georgia that meet the criteria. I had over 200 firefighters in the district fighting wildfires spread across 80 different fire agencies. I had trucks here from Jacksonville, Manatee County, Orange County, a couple from the East Coast, but Miami-Dade, which is like the premier department, are not wildfire trained. It takes a particular skill set and the proper protective equipment to do what we do.
- The Golden Gate Estates is the largest Wildland-Urban Interface community in Collier; Lehigh Acres is second.
- We just hired a Public Information Officer named Tiffany and she is going to be instrumental in getting the word out to people. She's going to be visiting meetings like this in the future. We're going to strive to enhance our social media.
- Every morning we get our daily weather forecast from Forestry. You'd be surprised how much weather plays in fire behavior. It addresses the relative humidity for the

day, the wind speed, which is measured at a 20-foot level, not at the ground level, thermal layering, inversions and where the clouds and everything mixes. It is forecasted in six different locations, and we pay attention. Plus, you have the National Park Service that does the same thing.

(B) Comcast, Justin Damiano, Director of Government Affairs

- PowerPoint Presentation provided.
- Mark Teaters asked Mr. Damiano for another map of the service area currently covered, but with a deeper dive of our entire area that we are responsible for and find out how much they cover. There are areas that are not covered.

6. Public Comment:

Mark Teaters: Next month the Sheriff is going to be here; the New Director for Code Enforcement; the Superintendent of Schools; the President of the Optima Foundation. That will be on March 19th.

Future topics remaining: Stormwater, economic development, parks and recreation, libraries, life of the landfill, affordable housing; re-visit transportation.

Kim Ellis, made a motion to move the topic of Affordable Housing to the April 16 meeting – asking Commissioner Kowal to speak; Robert Raines seconds.

Approved unanimously.

7. Adjourn

Robert Raines made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Kim Ellis seconds.

Approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Collier County East of 951 Ad Hoc Advisory Committee

Mark Teaters, Sr., Chairman

These minutes were approved by the Chairman of the East of 951 Committee

on _____, (check one) as submitted _____ or as amended _____.