

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO. 3**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONER
SPECIAL MEETING**

DECEMBER 28, 1993

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners Parker, Stowe, Morrison, Raudebaugh, and Irwin, Chief DeWitt and Mandy Plumb.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Parker called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. and asked the Chief to explain why he wanted a Special Meeting.

Chief DeWitt said that the meeting was called, if Chairman Parker remembered, for the purpose of discussing personnel issues between himself and the Board and the general staff in executive session.

Chairman Parker said that the Chief could make his presentation and then the Board could decide whether to go into executive session or not.

Chief DeWitt reiterated that the announcement that went out called for a Special Meeting for the purposes of an Executive Session to discuss personnel issues and he was very uncomfortable not having this done. The items that he wanted to discuss were very much personnel related and should be handled in an Executive Session.

Commissioner Raudebaugh said that he didn't feel it was necessary to go into an Executive Session and Chairman Parker concurred.

Chief DeWitt said that he would make his presentation, but wanted it to go on record that he requested an Executive Session and was denied.

Chief DeWitt went on to say that after the last Regular Board of Commissioners meeting, things were said that created an adversarial atmosphere between the staff and the commissioners. He went back to the office to research the policy manual, Clark Snure publications, and his contract in order to try to better understand what his job was, and that of the Commissioners. One of the reasons he wanted to call an Executive Session, was to discuss just what the expectations of the Chief were on the part of the Board of Commissioners.

Another item that he wanted to cover, as he previously told Chairman Parker, was the fact that three of the Commissioners, had probably, unknowingly, gone against District policy, and he felt it best to address these issues on a one-to-one basis in an Executive Session before the year's end. Chief DeWitt went on to say that some of the issues he wanted to address were, "What constitutes a meeting? and What is the duty of the District Secretary if the same person is the Chief?" He said that his first inclination was to bring these issues to the Concerns Committee, but after speaking to some of the Commissioners, he decided to try and solve the issues without further creating an adversarial atmosphere. He stated that it was not his desire to air the District's "dirty laundry" in the newspaper.

Chief DeWitt backed up his statement regarding the Board's inability to give him unified direction by bringing up the way his performance review was handled. He received a performance review that had five different expectations, with no uniformity in direction. He said that he needed some specific, unified guidelines from the Board as to his authority and expectations as Chief of this District.

The Chief went on to say that he felt we all needed to find a way to work together and accomplish the tasks of the District without creating an adversarial atmosphere.

Chairman Parker said that what the Chief was talking about was that some of the Commissioner's had put in for meeting compensation on a per meeting basis. He then charged the Chief with mismanagement. Why didn't he see that the "Little Girl" over there did this properly... Mandy Plumb objected to being called the "Little Girl", stating that she was a professional adult and should be addressed as one. Chairman Parker told her to "shut up and let me finish". Mandy insisted that he refrain from using this language while addressing her, whether directly or indirectly. Chairman Parker said, "Just shut-up over there and let me finish". Then he addressed her as the secretary, stating that it was her job to know what the Commissioners were responsible for and she should have found this out before it got to this point. Mandy interjected again, saying that she needed to understand something..."It's not only my job to know what I'm supposed to do, but I'm also supposed to know what the Commissioner's job and responsibilities are when the Commissioners don't even know what their job or responsibilities are?" Chairman Parker said, "Yes, you should have known." Mandy Plumb stated that she couldn't believe these people.

Chairman Parker went on to say that after speaking to the Chief prior to this meeting, he contacted the County and State Auditors regarding overpayment for meetings and they said that it is a common mistake. As long as it was corrected from this point forward, just let it go.

Commissioner Irwin said that she's known all along, from the beginning of her term, that you could not get paid for more than one meeting in a day, that compensation was based on a daily rate no matter how many meetings you attended. She stated that she

was surprised that Chairman Parker was unaware of this since he'd served on so many boards for such a long time.

Commissioner Raudebaugh requested that the Board drop this issue. Commissioner Morrison said he second that.

Commissioner Irwin said that this was not the way the Board should be conducting business with their staff. This is the same problem we had with our last staff. She found it hard to believe that this wasn't a problem with the Board and felt the members of the Board should take a good look at themselves to see how the problem could be corrected.

Commissioner Raudebaugh made a **MOTION** for the Board to make an effort at bringing the Chief into advisement and to make themselves better commissioners; Commissioner Irwin said that she would **SECOND** the motion, but that she wasn't clear what that exactly meant; without further clarification, Chairman Parker called for the vote and the **MOTION CARRIED** with 3 ayes and 2 abstaining (Commissioner Stowe and Irwin).

Chairman Parker said that the secretary keeps complaining that the Commissioners spend too much time at the office, bothering her to the point she can't get anything done. And, it was him that put a stop to that. He felt he was being a good commissioner and Chairman.

Mandy said that she had not even once made any such remarks to him, that she went out of her way to be helpful to the Commissioners. She said she always asks them, "do you need some help with that", or "not a problem, I can do it." She challenged the commissioners to deny this statement. No one did. She said that she felt it should be okay for the Commissioners to talk directly to her and that she was glad to help.

Chairman Parker said, "see, there you go, I fixed it and you undo it." Mandy said that he couldn't have fixed a problem that didn't exist. Chairman Parker said, "Well, Judy said that these were problems, and I fixed it so that the Commissioners would let you people do your job." Mandy said, "I wouldn't even try to defend myself over something that the prior staff had done and that she will not be held accountable for it. Maybe it was a problem then, but I never said it was one for me."

Chairman Parker said that that was enough of this and that Mandy shouldn't be allowed to control the meeting.

Commissioner Raudebaugh said that he recognized the efforts of the staff and that the Board had some problems, but this was great and he wanted to hear more.

Commissioner Irwin addressed Commissioner Raudebaugh, saying that it sounded like he was going to make efforts to change. Commissioner Raudebaugh responded, "I

never said anyone personally, but I think Mandy is bringing up some valid points and I would like to hear more."

Mandy Plumb responded with saying that she felt Commissioner Raudebaugh was playing management games from the onset of this meeting and found the tone of his comment patronizing. She had been to so many management seminars that it would make his head spin and didn't appreciate his crude attempts at whitewashing the problems. She felt they should cut to the chase and said that she felt Commissioner Raudebaugh instigated a lot of the issues that were now upsetting the staff. She further said that she didn't trust him and didn't feel that he was capable of changing, even though she would like to believe it. "This Board needs to congeal as one unit to become a positive power within and for this District". She said that she didn't think it would ever happen.

Chairman Parker said that he didn't think it would ever happen either because no one ever agreed.

Mandy said that that is what makes a team good. You need to have a difference of opinion in order to investigate all the options. Where this Board is going wrong is that they allow one person to control the entire movement. There is no compromise between you. If Roy doesn't want it, you can't have it. She apologized to Roy for singling him out, but said, "You are the one who has created alot of the problems that I personally have come to know or be a part of."

Commissioner Raudebaugh acknowledged the apology by saying, "That's o.k., your only stating the way you feel".

Chief DeWitt said that he wanted to concur with what Mandy was saying. He addressed Commissioner Raudebaugh saying, "I have taught management seminars, been asked to travel across the Country to teach management seminars. I teach the one I developed called "RAH RAH". He went into the meaning for each of the letters. He finished by saying that this Board fails to support their staff in every way.

Mandy then stated that, "She felt the Board, as a whole, was a very dysfunctional group and would never be trusted by the staff or the volunteers as long as the word and actions of the Commission could not be trusted. The Board is good at "talking the talk", but they haven't figured out how to "walk the talk", and until they do, it would be very difficult for anyone to take their word to heart.

Commissioner Raudebaugh said that he had personally made an open-invitation for the volunteers to attend the Board meetings and had offered to attend their association meetings. No one has taken him up on it.

Chairman Parker concurred, saying that everyone knows they can come to his home, anytime day or night, to discuss their views. He didn't know where Mandy was coming from saying those things.

Mandy said that it was off her observations and inter-workings with the volunteers that lead her to comment on this. "The staff is the mediator between the Commission and the volunteers. If your staff is unhappy, and being treated unfairly by the Commission, the volunteers are going to see it. If they see the Commission treating their staff poorly, what's to make them think you are not going to be the same with them. If your staff can't trust you, are they going to? They see a staff that has accomplished great tasks and made diligent efforts to turn this District around from its previous state. If the Commission is going to "dog" this same staff, who are the volunteers suppose to count on or believe in, the Commission? I believe we've proven that we are more than competent to perform the duties required of us, and yet we are still paying for the mistakes of past administrations. There is no foundation to support this kind of thinking anymore. I'm not sure why the Board is the way it is, or why they treat their staff the way they do, but the only thing I can come up with to try and justify this treatment to myself is that members of this Commission feel intimidated by the level of competency of the staff they now have because they've never had it before and now they don't know how to rely on it. Just with the staff alone, the Board gives authority to them so they can accomplish their jobs, and then allows members of the Board to attack and investigate everything they do. Right now, it is not o.k. for members of the staff to make mistakes. It's not even o.k. for them to risk making potential mistakes. We find ourselves playing the C.Y.A. game. We spend exhausting amounts of time doing the C.Y.A. thing for the one hour worth of work we do. All this because we can't trust the people we work for not to allow us a potential mistake or their belief that in giving us the authority to do our jobs, there is the potential for a mistake. It has to be o.k. to make mistakes. We can't be expected to defend ourselves over what someone thinks might have the potential to become a problem. The thought should be brought to us, and then worked out. Beat us up after, and if, we make a mistake. Don't condemn us before anything happens just because it could happen."

Further discussion was held on the need for future meetings to discuss staff roles.

Chairman Parker released the staff at 10:30 p.m. so the Board could go into an Executive Session to discuss personnel.