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Town of Ponce Inlet

Town Council

Special Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2021

1. **Call to Order:** Pursuant to proper notice, Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 4300 South Atlantic Avenue, Ponce Inlet, Florida. Mayor Smith passed the gavel to Vice-Mayor Paritsky under section 3.03.B of the Town Charter, due to a temporary medical issue that impacts his reading.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Vice-Mayor Paritsky led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call:**

Town Council:

Mayor Smith, Seat #1

Councilmember Milano, Seat #2

Councilmember Hoss, Seat #3; via Zoom technology due to extenuating circumstances.

Councilmember Israel, Seat #4

Vice-Mayor Paritsky, Seat #5

A quorum was established with all members of Council present.

Staff Members Present:

Attorney Brackins, Town Attorney, via Zoom

Ms. Cherbano, Human Resource Director/Deputy Clerk

Chief Glazier, Police Chief

Ms. Hugler, Office Manager

Ms. Hunt, Assistant Deputy Clerk

Mr. Irwin, IT Manager

Attorney Jeff Mandel, Town Labor Attorney

Deputy Chief Taylor, Fire-Rescue

Chief Scales, Fire Chief

Ms. Witt, Town Manager

4. **Reconsideration of the Town Council's denial of Special Event co-sponsorship request from the Racing's North Turn for the race car parade on February 6, 2021.** Vice-Mayor Paritsky stated this item is being brought before Council at Councilmember Israel's request for reconsideration. She stated that a motion for reconsideration must be made and passed prior to discussion of this item.

Councilmember Israel moved to reconsider the Town Council's denial of the Special Event co-sponsorship request from the Racing's North Turn for the race car parade on February 6, 2021; seconded by Mayor Smith. The motion PASSED 3-2, with the following vote: Councilmember Israel – yes; Mayor Smith – yes; Vice-Mayor Paritsky – yes; Councilmember Milano – no; Councilmember Hoss - no.

46 Councilmember Israel explained that at the December 10, 2020 meeting, this Council voted to
47 deny the co-sponsorship request from Racing’s North Turn. Based on the Town’s staff report dated
48 December 10, 2020, the County approved co-sponsorship of this event. He stated that this approval
49 poses a safety issue in Town, which led him to discussions with the applicants. He stated his belief
50 that the Town should grant the co-sponsorship request to ensure the safety and well-being of the
51 public and suggested better coordination between the Town and the County in the future. Mayor
52 Smith added that there is a letter from the State in support of this event. Councilmember Milano
53 stated his concerns with supporting the event are due to the COVID pandemic and he cannot, in
54 good conscience, support an event that draws a large number of spectators. Vice-Mayor Paritsky
55 stated she understood the risks but that this is an outdoor event and attendees will be urged to abide
56 by CDC guidelines and the applicants have provided a plan for keeping attendees safe, including
57 providing masks, hand sanitizing stations, signage, and distance markers. She expressed support
58 of the event provided town staff be allowed to volunteer to work the event rather than mandating
59 employees to work it. Vice-Mayor Paritsky opened public comment. Walt Glasnak, 4511 South
60 Atlantic Avenue (Racing’s North Turn Restaurant) stated the current CDC guidelines will be
61 followed, including mandating masks for drivers, restaurant employees, and volunteers; all others
62 will be strongly encouraged to wear masks and practice social distancing. Shuttle capacity along
63 with pick-up and drop-off locations will be monitored and adjusted as needed to ensure social
64 distancing. Sharone LeMieux, 4590 South Atlantic Avenue had submitted an email which was
65 provided to Council in advance of the meeting stating her opposition to granting this request based
66 on the increase in cases over the past couple of weeks. Vice-Mayor Paritsky closed public
67 comment.

68
69 Vice-Mayor Paritsky moved to reverse Council’s previous denial and to approve the co-
70 sponsorship request from the Racing’s North Turn for the race car parade event scheduled on
71 February 6, 2021; seconded by Councilmember Israel. The motion PASSED 3-2, with the
72 following vote: Vice-Mayor Paritsky – yes; Councilmember Israel – yes; Councilmember Milano
73 – no; Councilmember Hoss – no; Mayor Smith - yes.

74
75 **5. Discussion of preliminary service proposal options prepared at the Town’s request by**
76 **Volusia County Fire-EMS:** Vice-Mayor Paritsky introduced this item as follows:

77 Before us this evening is the presentation and subsequent discussion of a proposal
78 the Council received from Volusia County earlier this month to partner with us in
79 providing Fire and EMS services to the residents of Ponce Inlet. For the sake of
80 clarification, there is no contract before us, and nothing will be voted on at this
81 meeting. This item has been placed on the agenda to provide all of us with the
82 opportunity to learn more about Fire Service Delivery and what is being proposed.
83 Our discussion this evening is likely to reveal additional aspects that may require
84 further review; therefore, no conclusions should be reached at this initial stage. I
85 would like to start by addressing some of the major concerns and misconceptions
86 that have been communicated to me over the last several months. First, the
87 firehouse which is currently located at 4680 South Peninsula Drive is not closing
88 and not moving. Some residents have expressed their concerns about not seeing the
89 same familiar faces in their Ponce Inlet uniforms. Under the terms of this proposal,
90 all current fire personnel are not only to be retained, many, if not most of our
91 firefighters, will see pay increases in addition to other benefits that will be outlined

92 this evening. Another major area of concern pertains to out-of-town transport and
93 the desire of our residents to keep our ambulance close by should a resident need
94 it. As Mr. Pozzo will explain, the proposal will release us from our current
95 obligation to perform transports outside of Ponce Inlet and Wilbur by the Sea. It
96 may also be helpful to put this issue into historical context. As far back as 2010, a
97 study was commissioned by Volusia County that explored the consolidation of Fire
98 services. In 2019, former County Chairman Ed Kelly raised the issue of exploring
99 the idea of consolidation, at a regular monthly meeting of the Volusia County
100 Roundtable of Elected officials. Partnering with the County is neither a new nor
101 novel concept. At present, 11 of the 16 municipalities in Volusia County already
102 have such an arrangement in place for EMS services. The proceedings will start
103 with opening remarks by our Town Manager Jeaneen Witt. Town Manager Witt
104 will be followed by the Volusia County Director of Public Protection, Mr. Joe
105 Pozzo. Included in the agenda packet is Mr. Pozzo's resume. If you have not already
106 had the opportunity to do so, I would encourage you to read his bio and learn more
107 about his career in public protection. We also have with us this evening as an
108 additional resource for information relevant to this discussion, our labor attorney
109 Jeff Mandel, who is available for questions after the presentations. Ms. Witt and
110 Mr. Pozzo will present without interruptions, Council will then have the
111 opportunity to ask questions of Ms. Witt and Mr. Pozzo. This evening's
112 presentations will be followed by public participation and a discussion by the town
113 council. Throughout the evening, we will adhere to the Town's Rules of Order and
114 Parliamentary Procedures to ensure the orderly conduct of this meeting. Once
115 Council has concluded its questions and discussion, we will open the floor to the
116 public. Each individual has 5 minutes to speak. Staff will be taking copious notes
117 so that prior to the end of the meeting, we will attempt to respond to as many
118 questions as possible. Questions that require additional research may be answered
119 subsequent to this meeting. Now, before Ms. Witt speaks, I would like to briefly
120 explain my goals as the chair of this meeting. I am asking that everyone in
121 attendance here today, both in the audience and on the dais, work together to
122 establish an atmosphere where everyone can express their ideas and opinions in a
123 respectful and constructive manner. Everyone here in Chambers should make it a
124 goal to learn as much as possible, particularly from those with whom you may not
125 agree. The topic of discussion touches upon the safety and wellbeing of our
126 community which understandably invokes passionate concern for all of us. Please
127 listen with an open mind. After we have adjourned, I hope we can all thank each
128 other for respectfully sharing our ideas and opinions.

129 Ms. Witt gave this subsequent introduction:

130 As mentioned, over the past several years, the subject of the number of firefighters
131 needed per shift, the type of equipment needed, and possible advantages in
132 contracting fire services has come up in a variety of forums. There have been
133 estimated efficiencies to include greater access to additional personnel and
134 equipment when paying for a service from a larger agency when service level
135 requirements are the same, which they are on a nationally level for Fire-EMS
136 service. Several months back, the Town Council requested that I reach out to obtain
137 information from Volusia County about contracting Fire-EMS service. In response

138 to this request, Volusia County staff has provided us with proposals that include
139 four firefighters per shift, which is what we currently have; and five firefighters per
140 shift, which is what has been suggested as a better staffing model by those with
141 experience in the field. Volusia County staff have further broken each proposal
142 down, depending on whether the Town were to continue to own and maintain the
143 equipment or if the Town were to choose to contract out the equipment
144 responsibilities as well. While costs and efficiencies were the driving force behind
145 looking into this in the beginning, information that we have gained in this process
146 has made other aspects worth weighing into the mix as well and overall, this process
147 continues to be very educational. If accepting responsibility for the Town's fire
148 service, Volusia County would perform a risk assessment of Ponce Inlet, which is the
149 best way to determine the type of equipment needed to mitigate the specific fire risks
150 that we have in our community. As we discussed this, I had our planning & development
151 department put a list together of the number, types, and heights of structures that we
152 have in Town. As I sit here today, I can assure you that regardless of who performs this
153 service going forward, a risk assessment is something that will be prioritized. This study
154 will be well-timed, as our fire engine & pumper truck are both reaching the end of their
155 lifespans and will need to be replaced in the next few years. As a single-station
156 department, we either purchase and maintain extra equipment or we lack internal
157 redundancy and hope to borrow equipment from a neighboring city when needed; but
158 if contracting with Volusia County, their entire Fire-EMS protection system becomes
159 available to us and it is built with sufficient redundancy to ensure that equipment is
160 available if a sudden replacement is needed. For the past 20 years, the Town's Fire-
161 EMS service model has remained pretty much the same with the exception of adding
162 the internal transport component and recently one more firefighter per shift. Yet, over
163 these same 20 years, almost all of the Town's condominiums have been developed,
164 dramatically larger single-family homes have been built, increased historical structure
165 preservation efforts have taken place, and more businesses have come to Ponce Inlet.
166 Overall, these significant changes in our community support prudent review of our Fire-
167 EMS service delivery to ensure the continued health, safety, and well-being of Ponce
168 Inlet residents and their property.

169 Vice-Mayor Paritsky introduced Mr. Pozzo, reviewed his bio, and requested he provide an update on
170 the COVID vaccination program. Mr. Pozzo reported that additional vaccination sites will be made
171 available in the coming weeks, including one at the Volusia County fairgrounds. He stated that the
172 first-come, first-served program that was done independently and not in coordination with the County
173 did not go well. The County will offer pre-registration sites and the State will supply vaccines to the
174 County on a regular basis.

175 **A. Presentation by Volusia County** - Joe Pozzo, Volusia County Director of Public
176 Protection provided a presentation entitled "Discussion of Fire Rescue Partnership", dated January
177 14, 2021 (Attachment #1).

178
179 **B. Discussion by Town Council** - Councilmember Israel asked the following
180 questions: currently there are 4 fire personnel per shift, will that change and are the firefighters
181 cross-trained? Mr. Pozzo stated the County will maintain the current staffing level, with the current

182 staff who are cross-trained; all of the County’s staff are cross-trained as well. Councilmember
183 Israel asked since the town’s firefighters will have to go through the County’s hiring process, what
184 happens if someone does not meet the County’s standards; will they lose their job? Mr. Pozzo
185 stated they will have to make application and pass a background check, all processes and
186 procedures in place by the County for new hires would be followed. Councilmember Israel asked
187 if the employees would lose their seniority but be able to keep their retirement. Mr. Pozzo stated
188 they would start out as new employees and would be able to keep their state retirement.
189 Councilmember Israel stated the County pays DB Shores to protect Wilbur, if the County takes
190 over this department, the County would not have to pay DB Shores, correct? Mr. Pozzo explained
191 that if this occurs, the County would re-negotiate their contract with DB Shores. Councilmember
192 Israel asked why the County would have to renegotiate with the Shores if the County would utilize
193 Ponce Inlet’s equipment. Mr. Pozzo explained the contract with the Shores does not only cover
194 Wilbur-by-the-Sea, it includes unincorporated areas west of A1A and north of Dunlawton.
195 Councilmember Israel asked what happens to the Ponce Chief, Deputy Chief, and Office Manager.
196 Mr. Pozzo stated the proposal only includes the twelve shift personnel (firefighters and
197 lieutenants). Councilmember Israel asked if the County would keep all proceeds from ambulance
198 transport fees. Mr. Pozzo stated yes. Councilmember Israel referenced the County’s budget of
199 \$1,702,943 and Ponce Inlet’s budget of \$1,748,866, a difference of \$45,923, and stated that if the
200 town is looking to save money, it will not because the County will keep all transport fees
201 (approximately \$110,000 annually). Mr. Pozzo noted these are proposals and it is up to the town
202 to decide what it wants to do. Councilmember Milano stated that over the past couple of years,
203 several citizens who were retired firefighters, stated that we needed four firefighters per shift, then
204 suggested five per shift, then someone stated we should have six per shift; then someone said the
205 town should buy a ladder truck. We do not have a risk assessment, we could lose transport fees,
206 some citizens suggested the town should bill non-residents for services; he has concerns about an
207 “escape clause”, stated his wish that all current employees remain employed with their current
208 salary, and added that “we need to get this right”. Mr. Pozzo stated that in the proposal, a risk
209 assessment is suggested to ensure staffing levels and equipment are adequate; the County would
210 not move away from current staffing and constantly monitors data for risks and areas for
211 improvements. He noted that the “escape clause” would be part of the contract and depends on
212 what the town wants to do. Mayor Smith noted that the ISO rating is better in Ponce Inlet than the
213 County’s and asked how this could affect the town’s overall rating. Mr. Pozzo noted that the ISO
214 is a community rating and includes the fire department, water service, and emergency
215 communications. The County’s ISO rating is 4 and they know where improvements need to be
216 made and that he was not sure if the Town would be rated separately. Chief Bailey, VCFR stated
217 his office is researching this matter. Councilmember Hoss stated she had no questions. Vice-Mayor
218 Paritsky stated that she had heard concerns expressed that any changes could result in longer
219 response times. Mr. Pozzo explained how the 9-1-1 process works - from the time the 9-1-1 call is
220 received to when the crew arrives on the scene; all 9-1-1 calls are handled according to NFPA
221 standards and nothing would change if contracted through the County. Data is routinely reviewed
222 to ensure adherence. Vice-Mayor Paritsky provided a review of transports noting that currently
223 Ponce Inlet provides transport services in town, Daytona Beach Shores, Port Orange, Daytona
224 Beach, New Smyrna Beach, and Ormond Beach; the proposal limits transports to the Town and
225 Wilbur-by-the-Sea. She stated based on her research, the proposal depicts a 98.2% reduction in the
226 town’s service area (120.7 square miles to 2.1 square miles, approximately). She asked if this was
227 a correct depiction. Mr. Pozzo stated yes; accurate from the standpoint that the larger graphic is

228 the potential coverage area now. She inquired about how the EMS staff operates, by policies and
229 procedures, and are they the Town's or the County's. Mr. Pozzo stated EMS protocols are medical
230 protocols that are established by Dr. Peter Springer and these would not change. She asked if the
231 personnel assigned to the Town could be relocated during special events. Mr. Pozzo stated no, the
232 district staffing would be maintained. She noted that there would be a contract, though we are not
233 there yet, that would include a scope of service, standards, allocation of resources, staffing,
234 termination of contract, etc. and asked how staff would be covered during vacations, illnesses, etc.
235 Mr. Pozzo stated there is a constant staffing policy that is budgeted for vacancies, planned and
236 unplanned. He noted that the president of the County's local bargaining unit is present to address
237 questions. She asked if this same process would apply to equipment and apparatus. Mr. Pozzo
238 stated yes, the County has a vast resource of equipment and apparatus that can be allocated in the
239 event of a breakdown.

240
241 Councilmember Israel read a statement he prefaced as some of it being his opinion and some of it
242 being fact, but mostly fact.

243 I want to begin by saying that I find it very interesting that for several years now,
244 two very concerned retired fire officials who live in our town have come in front of
245 the Council in reference to manpower. Last year, the Council approved three more
246 fire personnel and one supervisor. At that time, nothing had been said regarding
247 replacing our fire department with Volusia County's fire department. This past June
248 2020, the Ponce Inlet Fire Department endorsed me as I ran for Council Seat 4 and
249 through my campaign of communication and transparency, I advised our citizens
250 of the fact that our ambulance fell under the Mutual Aid Policy and the ambulances
251 were not in town a great deal of time because they were transporting patients from
252 other jurisdictions. Surprisingly, I was shocked to find out that most of the residents
253 were not aware of that policy. After I won the election in August 2020 and in
254 September when we had our general Council meeting, of which I was not a part of
255 since I was not yet sworn in as a councilmember, I was sitting in the audience when
256 Councilmember Milano made a statement that the Town needs to find out from a
257 larger organization what would be the appropriate level of staffing. He stated, if it's
258 six, then we need to figure out how to do it. If not, then we need to find the
259 appropriate use of our department and its relationship with the county. He also
260 asked if anyone else on the Council would agree to authorize the town manager to
261 investigate this matter. He also stated on line 542 to line 545 of the September 17,
262 2020 council meeting minutes, that he noted and I quote "he noted that questions
263 were raised as to the possibility of Volusia County taking over the fire department."
264 (Unquote). He also read from the July Council meeting minutes, on line 252, where
265 he stated (Quote) "Mrs. DiCarlo asked if the town has ever considered giving up
266 the fire department and going with the county." (Unquote). The Mayor stated he
267 was curious then and is curious now. Vice Mayor Hoss suggested gathering as
268 much information as possible so that the Council could make an informed decision.
269 Councilmember Milano noted that there is currently not enough room in the fire
270 department house for six members per shift and stated that crews would be sleeping
271 in bunk beds or the town would face building a new facility. Council directed the
272 town manager to obtain a quote from the county for the fire/EMS services,
273 authorized by the Mayor, Councilmembers Hoss and Milano. I find it terribly

274 troubling that after all these years of discussions about the fire department and
275 manpower, all of a sudden after I win the election after being endorsed by the fire
276 department, the Council is interested in replacing the fire department personnel.
277 Wow, isn't that a coincidence? Let me add that the fire department did not start the
278 discussion about manpower, it was two retired fire officials who began the
279 discussion. The Council listened to these two retired fire officials for two years and
280 did nothing but now it's a major issue. I find it very interesting that this discussion
281 by Councilmember Milano was not placed on the agenda of the September meeting,
282 but he waited until the end of the meeting to bring this up. Obviously, he did not
283 want it on the meeting agenda because it would've been put out to the public for
284 viewing and I'm sure many people would've been here, just as they are tonight. My
285 opinion, and only my opinion, is this is a planned event to dismantle our hard-
286 working, conscientious fire department who have saved so many lives in this town.
287 I also find it interesting that the Town ordered a new ambulance for approximately
288 \$192,000 prior to my election. If they were planning on changing over to Volusia
289 County, why would they purchase an ambulance? This just proves this entire
290 scenario is about my election and the fire department endorsing me as a union. I
291 have done my study of the budget because it's been said that the fire department
292 budget is too high. A preliminary calculation shows that if you subtract the fire
293 department's budget from the police department's and you take out the ambulance
294 that has been ordered, they are only \$46,480 apart, with the fire department being
295 the slightly higher budget. What is not being said is the fire department is a money-
296 making entity for the town. What I'm about to give you now are the real numbers.
297 In 2018, we were paid \$81,403 for in-town residents transports to hospitals and
298 \$29,866 for out-of-town residents transported to hospitals. This is \$111,269 that we
299 collected that does not show on the fire department's budget. In 2019, we collected
300 \$89,890.20 from in-town transports and \$39,780.28 from out-of-town transports.
301 That is a total of \$129,670.48. In 2020, I only have the totals that were collected for
302 trip counts and charges, which equaled in-town of \$128,493 and out-of-town
303 \$85,479 for a total of \$213,972. Unfortunately, these numbers do not reflect deficits
304 and non-payment by in-town and out-of-town patients, so this \$213,972 number
305 might change a little once we receive that number. The total of these three years
306 totals approximately \$454,911.48. If you look at these numbers, you'll realize our
307 fire department is making money for our town. Why would you want to turn the
308 fire department over to another department and lost that kind of money such as the
309 last three years of approximately \$454,911.48? Like I said, there is something
310 extremely suspicious about wanting to get rid of the fire department right after my
311 election. Of course, if you look at our budget, this approximate number of
312 \$454,911.48 is not reflected in the fire department budget so the numbers indicated
313 in the budget are not true. Let's put the approximate \$454,911.48 back into the last
314 three years' fire department budgets to show that the fire department's budget is
315 not as high as the town manager and Council would like you to believe. Remember,
316 if we go with the Volusia County's proposal, we will lose this income but have a
317 larger area of responsibility. The only department coming out ahead would be
318 Volusia County. Another issue that is not being discussed with the town residents
319 is that presently the County pays the Shores a large sum of money per year for the

320 county to cover Wilbur-by-the-Sea. The county will no longer have to pay this if
321 they (the county) takes over our fire department, which is a savings for the county.
322 In effect, Volusia County will be providing fire service to Wilbur-by-the-Sea at the
323 cost to our Ponce Inlet residents through our contract with the County and will pay
324 less to the Shores to provide fire service to Wilbur-by-the-Sea. I also want to add
325 that if we go with the specific plans suggested by the County, we will still be
326 responsible for the maintenance of the firehouse and the fire vehicles. Further, there
327 is no guarantee that our fire personnel will be retained by Volusia County. For
328 Instance, every fire personnel will have to apply for a job with the county. If
329 something goes wrong and they are not qualified, they could lose their job. The
330 only real guarantee for the fire personnel is their state retirement fund will stay
331 intact. Also, seniority will go away which is no way to treat our dedicated
332 firefighters. It's my opinion that the Town and not the Citizens 4 Ponce Inlet (C4PI)
333 should do a survey of our town residents to see if they want our fire department to
334 stay intact and work for the Town and to not work for the county, or if the residents
335 are OK with the county taking over our fire service. Also, we have two ambulances
336 we could still transport under county agreement and leave one ambulance in town
337 if we hire at least two more F.F. per shift.
338

339 Mayor Smith stated this whole issue started when the statement was made that the transport
340 program was broken. He stated it would be a great idea if we could keep our ambulance in town,
341 but that is not how the system works. He felt that with the transport component being an impetus
342 of the Fire-EMS service delivery topic over the past year that the options regarding it should be
343 specifically discussed: the first option is that we transport no-one and wait for EVAC to come for
344 every transport call; the second option is to maintain what we are currently doing and participate
345 in the municipal transport agreement; and the third option is contracting the service to Volusia
346 County and having a district created that would limit transport to include response to only Ponce
347 Inlet and Wilbur by the Sea. Mayor Smith stated that we are transporting on average once per day;
348 during the early days of the pandemic, we transported once every two days; so are we looking for
349 the best option and we are looking to gather all the information possible and get it out to the public
350 and reduce the rumors and misinformation. Mayor Smith felt that everyone needed to choose the
351 option they were are the most comfortable with and put this matter to rest. Vice-Mayor Paritsky
352 agreed, noting that opinions can only be made based upon facts, adding that there are social media
353 posts and flyers circulating that are literally scaring the residents. She noted that Attorney Mandel,
354 the town's labor attorney since 2002, was at the dais to address and questions or concerns. Attorney
355 Mandel stated he is a labor and employment attorney and has negotiated with the fire union and
356 the police union. He also assists HR with employment issues. He noted that the town has gone
357 through many changes and what the Council is doing tonight, is not unusual. It is important to
358 determine the best and most efficient means of service delivery for the public. To some, merging
359 with a larger district makes sense, but it all depends on what makes sense to the jurisdiction and
360 what the citizens here want. He stated that Councilmembers are asking the right questions and is
361 sure there will be more. He added that if a change in service delivery is made, it will have to be
362 impact bargained with the bargaining unit employees. He noted that the issue of "transport" has
363 been an on-going issue with the bargaining unit.
364

365 **C. Public Participation** – Vice-Mayor Paritsky opened public participation. Mike
366 Mirage, 15 Mar Azul North asked Director Pozzo if the contract came down to the firefighters
367 keeping their seniority or if it was non-negotiable, could that be part of the contract. He applauded
368 all of the firefighters and police officers for their service. He stated his reason for settling here was
369 because of the town’s fire department and police department. He asked if the Town has ever hired
370 a professional to do an assessment; and read an email Ms. Witt sent to him on January 8th, and
371 asked if this was fact or opinion regarding the town not being able to put out a fire by itself
372 (Attachment 3). Tom Haines, Links Village Drive asked: 1. Will the training mentioned in the
373 County’s proposal still be available to Ponce Inlet FD if the town does not join the County; 2. Will
374 coverage reduction be available to Ponce Inlet FD if Ponce Inlet does not join the County; 3. Will
375 this proposal if pursued, be put to a vote before the entire town. JoAnn Doyle, 127 Ponce deLeon
376 Circle, asked if this would create a special service district which would be an additional tax.
377 Edwina Knox, 113 Rains Drive, stated she has lived in Ponce Inlet for more than 50 years and has
378 witnessed the department evolve into what it is today; she expressed concerns with County staff
379 not personally knowing the residents and wants to retain the staff we have. David Loh, 103
380 Oceanway Drive, stated a community risk assessment was started by a couple of concerned retired
381 career firefighters. He stated Council and Admin have been provided with photos, videos, statistics
382 and facts showing the multitude of tasks needed to be done during a Fire or EMS incident. He
383 asked what is the acceptable level of risk to our community and the personnel? He outlined the
384 demographics and noted that there are fuel and chemical trucks delivering inside the town limits;
385 being a seaside community and not owning a fire/rescue boat is inconceivable; without proper
386 staffing, many tasks could be missed or not completed. He suggested a higher level of service and
387 noted that fire departments are necessary just like fire insurance. He stressed regardless of the
388 outcome, there should be no negative impact to our firefighters. Paul Roxenberg, 119 Beach Street
389 asked if the County would consider moving the current personnel to the County as a lateral transfer
390 which would allow them to keep their seniority. Jim Hinson, 4745 S. Atlantic Avenue stated we
391 have one of the best fire departments in the country and should remain as is. He noted that that ten
392 years ago we had to wait for an ambulance, now we can transport our own. He asked what this
393 will cost, will there be a fire tax, will there be an opt-out option, and what is the advantage? Joe
394 DiCarlo, 32 Caribbean Way, stated that revenues and expenses must be considered when
395 comparing transport proceeds and added that all avenues should be explored to determine the best
396 options for the town. Elizabeth Caswell, 48 Pompano Drive stated she submitted her top ten
397 questions to the town manager earlier in the day; she thanked everyone for researching this issue.
398 She stated her support for a county-wide EMS and a town-wide fire service model for Ponce Inlet,
399 as presented in option 2. She referred to Council’s priority list and noted that there is one for the
400 FD, “continue patient transport program”. She noted the importance of reviewing public records
401 to obtain fact-based information. Skip White, 4885 S. Atlantic Ave. stated, the Vision Statement
402 for Ponce Inlet states, *The community will be recognized for the professionalism and integrity of*
403 *its government and the high level of citizen involvement and participation in the life of the*
404 *community*. After listening to this proposal from Volusia County, the dollars and cents savings do
405 not add up to moving forward with the County. If this proposal continues, he requested that citizens
406 be allowed to vote before any contract with the County is signed. He noted that this is a very
407 difficult discussion but should not be based upon dollars and cents. Sherri Utter, 4715 Montrose
408 Avenue stated her support of keeping the Fire/EMS department a town department. She explained
409 her understanding of trying to save money, but these employees know the citizens and it is
410 important to keep them local. Kimberly Comfort, 85 Ocean Way Drive stated it says “could” about

411 the area PI covering only PI and Wilbur not “would”; this feels like blackmail. If this can be done
412 with a contract, then why can’t it be done now without signing a Volusia contract? She stated she
413 moved here because we have our own police and fire. Fire and EMS came to our home for our
414 aging residents for flu shots when they were being provided, would Volusia County do this? Lastly,
415 is our community so bad that Volusia County would let us burn if we needed them and were not
416 part of the County? She stated her impression that we help each other regardless of ownership of
417 the fire department. She stated her support to keep the fire department in its’ entirety. Cynthia
418 Johnston, 70 Inlet Harbor Road, stated her support that a risk assessment should be done; sees no
419 cost-savings to the Town, and noted that if the town should break the contract, it would have to
420 buy its own equipment back. She stated that although there have been increases in condo and
421 building sizes, this occurred during the same time that fire suppression system upgrades were
422 mandated. She noted that our personnel can participate in the County training program and due to
423 mutual aid agreements, other departments help us with fire suppression activities. She asked if the
424 town has a fund for the replacement of fire trucks; asked if the fire department is accredited, and
425 if not, we should pursue that immediately; she stated this issue needs to be decided by the residents,
426 not the Council. Marc Jariz, 4746 Riverglen Blvd. stated he disagreed with the vaccine rollout
427 successfulness portrayal; noted that many residents are not personally in attendance due to the
428 virus; stated that it appears choice 2 and 3 (regarding the transport options) are redundant; asked
429 if there were past performance issues; questioned why current personnel would lose seniority; that
430 OT may go to outside personnel; do we review cost/reward comparison of PD, PW and Admin;
431 and do we become a Wilbur? Tony Goudie, 4715 Dixie Drive, thanked Director Pozzo for the
432 proposal. He referenced the 98% reduction in service coverage area, and stated that we are the
433 smallest department in Volusia County, with the least amount of resources, yet are tasked
434 disproportionately with a large service area - how is that justified? He asked why the town is not
435 legislating for itself to obtain and maintain its own transport program; questioned why the town
436 has had the same labor attorney for nineteen years and still no ratified union contract; expressed
437 concerns that town employees would become “day 1” employees with the county. He encouraged
438 Council to explore options and praised Home Rule. Margaret Marina, 4670 Links Village Drive,
439 noted there are best practices. She asked if there was a way to engage the County to provide a risk
440 assessment, are any benefits to Wilbur being applied to Ponce Inlet if it assumes coverage, if we
441 do not move under County control, will our geographic coverage area change from what it is today,
442 and there are incidents in which a small community cannot predict - what happens now if we do
443 not have the necessary resources? Resilience includes having a Plan B. Tracy Somerville, 4575 S.
444 Atlantic Avenue stated her support of the fire department and keeping it local. Karen Reid, 49
445 Marie Drive, stated you should never give up home rule. She expressed support of our police, fire,
446 and public works departments; a lateral transfer is a disservice to those who have served the town
447 for so long; and asked what happens to the Chief, Deputy Chief, and Office Manager. Jim Utter,
448 4715 Montrose Avenue thanked Council and Director Pozzo for the presentation; stated this town
449 did not come about by “mistake”; everything we have, we have fought for, including the fire
450 department, which began as a group of volunteers and evolved into what we have today. He
451 stressed the importance of the “human factor” and noted these medics have saved countless lives.
452 Derek George, PIPFF President, 4680 S. Peninsula Drive, thanked Council and Director Pozzo for
453 the presentation; he stated it is his intention to save this department; he thanked the community for
454 its support and noted that he has 200+ petitions that he will present at the next Council meeting.
455 He stated there was confusion about the response times, noting that the increase would be due to
456 covering Wilbur. He stated that the department would still respond to calls County-wide; if there

457 are 825 calls for assistance in Ponce Inlet, you can estimate that Wilbur would have a comparable
458 amount. He stated that regardless of the political climate, the men and women of this department
459 will always be ready, willing, and able to respond. He added that if you give up the fire department,
460 you can rest assured that the police department would be next - as it is cheaper to post a couple of
461 deputies on beachside rather than fund an entire department. He noted the ISO rating may change
462 due to the increased coverage area; and the County would be eliminating \$300,000 in salaries
463 between the Chief, Deputy Chief, and Admin personnel. Kyle Oberst, Local 4140, stated that
464 mutual aid agreements exist because local entities assist each other; when the town increased
465 staffing to four per shift, it was to ensure that if the ambulance was out of town, there was a crew
466 available to respond with our fire truck. If we assume coverage in Wilbur, this could change. Vice-
467 Mayor Paritsky allowed for second comments. Karen Reid, 49 Marie Drive, cautioned that the
468 smallest department could be the first to be cut/closed. Paul Roxenberg, 119 Beach Street, stated
469 there are a few important points to consider: it appears this is strictly a cost savings issue where
470 the council wants to be more efficient with the funds that the citizens of Ponce entrust to them, if
471 this was the guiding reason for the inquiry of contract services, then he expects the next move
472 would be to seek bids from the county to provide police protection - after all, Volusia County does
473 have a large Sheriff's department and that too may provide a cost savings to the citizens; while we
474 are searching for additional ways to save money, we should get an estimate to replace the building
475 department and the public works department - contracting out these services would also provide
476 financial relief to the citizens of Ponce Inlet; and our water and sewer services are already provided
477 by Port Orange. Now that we have contracted out those services to Volusia County, it seems
478 reasonable that we would no longer need a town manager - so that would also be a cost savings
479 since there would be nobody for her to manage; and let us not forget the Town Council - why
480 would we them? Once we have allowed Volusia County to provide all the services required to run
481 Ponce Inlet, it would be time to disband the Council and to no longer be incorporated. No need for
482 all that expensive paperwork and filing fees every year since we have found a more cost-effective
483 way to serve the needs of the people living here. Our services represent who we are - this is why
484 people love Ponce Inlet - think hard on this one. Vice-Mayor Paritsky closed public participation.

485
486 Ms. Witt began reading the categories of questions for appropriate response. Regarding Seniority
487 - Director Pozzo noted that the County has a contract with its Union, so they would impact-bargain
488 this topic. Attorney Mandel added that Union presidents often resolve many of these types of issues
489 between themselves. Regarding an assessment of our fire department - Ms. Witt stated this would
490 be in the form of an accreditation process, which they have researched but not been able to move
491 forward with. Regarding her email "that Ponce Inlet is not capable of fighting a fire on its own;
492 so, when there is a fire, we will have to continue to respond to that out of town if we expect the
493 same in return." That is a fact, not her opinion. There have been two major structure fires since
494 she has worked for the town; at each incident, there were a total of four agencies. This has been
495 her experience. Regarding use of County training facilities - the County's training facility has
496 always been available. Regarding the reduced coverage district - would that still be available to
497 Ponce Inlet if the town did not contract with the County. Director Pozzo stated the potential
498 reduction is only available *if* the town contracts with the County; in that scenario the town would
499 not be required, as it is under the municipal transport agreement, to be dispatched to a Priority E
500 or Priority 1-E call outside the district. He added that units returning to their station, that come
501 upon an accident, are obligated to stop and render aid; if you choose to respond because you are
502 the closest unit, you notify dispatch to take the call. Regarding a town resident vote - Vice-Mayor

503 Paritsky stated it is premature at this time as this is very preliminary. Councilmember Israel stated
504 the Town should survey the residents to get feedback. Mayor Smith expressed concerns that there
505 is so much misinformation out there, that residents would be providing an answer based on untrue,
506 misinformation, and that we need to get more information - to make sure everyone makes an
507 informed decision, not an emotional decision. Councilmember Israel stated there are residents
508 present, residents on Zoom, the agenda was published, and the County provided the information,
509 what else can we do? Vice-Mayor Paritsky noted that there is a lot of information to review, many
510 great questions were raised, and we need to take our time with this. Councilmember Milano
511 suggested that the town manager and the County meet to further discuss proposals, as no one ever
512 accepts the first proposal made. Councilmember Israel asked Director Pozzo if he had any other
513 proposals or is this the only one. Director Pozzo stated there are many questions that need to be
514 answered; and there are some financial pieces that we would have to work on with the town
515 manager. Regarding a Special Taxing district - Ms. Witt stated no, Ponce Inlet would not become
516 a special taxing district; the town would write a check to pay for the services it is being provided.
517 Regarding the lack of familiarity with residents - Ms. Witt confirmed that the same staff would be
518 available for at least the first year. Vice-Mayor Paritsky asked if there would be a reason to re-
519 assign our staff; Director Pozzo explained the transfer process. Jeremy Karaginis, IAFF Local
520 3574 President, representing over 178 men and women, acknowledged Director Pozzo and Chief
521 Bailey for providing them with everything they need. He stated he has not spoken with Ponce Inlet
522 Lt. George and offered his support should the town move forward. He noted that seniority could
523 be worked out during the negotiations process. Regarding the town's fire station being cut/closed
524 in the future - Ms. Witt clarified that the fire station would not close. Vice-Mayor Paritsky agreed
525 and noted that this would be included in the contract. Regarding an acceptable level of risk and the
526 costs associated to meet them - Ms. Witt stated that Ponce Inlet just emerged from a 10-year lawsuit
527 so many projects and priorities had been on hold and we are now playing "catch up" with a lot to
528 do. Regarding cost above the current - it depends upon the cost of staff and equipment, noting that
529 we are behind in equipment funding. Regarding the opt-out option, Attorney Mandel stated it
530 depends upon what is negotiated in the contract, adding that it is important identify items of
531 specific importance, to ensure these are addressed during contract negotiations. Regarding the
532 benefit to the town - Vice-Mayor Paritsky stated that this would be what we are trying to determine.
533 Regarding county coverage in the event we are in need - Ms. Witt stated there are interlocal
534 agreements; Director Pozzo stated being County-wide, there are technical teams and assets
535 available to all public protection agencies whenever it is needed. Mayor Smith noted that the
536 County provides EVAC coverage when needed. Regarding an equipment replacement program -
537 Ms. Witt stated that a capital equipment fund has been established. Regarding the three transport
538 options - Mayor Smith stated, to have the smallest area and staying closest to town is the first
539 option; the town assists with closest-unit responses with the second option; or the town does not
540 transport any patients and we wait for EVAC. He added that the town transports on average, once
541 per day and that misinformation regarding the transport issue is what started this research. Ms.
542 Witt clarified the options: no fire-based transport (EVAC only), fire-based transport as we do now,
543 and respond to priority calls as needed; or contract with Volusia County to create a district that
544 includes Ponce Inlet and Wilbur-by-the-Sea. Councilmember Israel stated there is a fourth option
545 - since we have a second ambulance, we could staff it, he stated he would bring that at a later time.
546
547 Vice-Mayor Paritsky moved to extend the meeting time to 10:15 p.m.; seconded by Councilmember
548 Israel. The motion PASSED 5-0, voice-vote.

549 Regarding overtime going to out-of-town personnel - Director Pozzo noted that they have a large
550 staff of personnel and if the town staff becomes County personnel, they would be used like all
551 other county staff for coverage. Regarding the cost/reward of other departments - Ms. Witt noted
552 that some services are contracted out. Attorney Mandel stated it is not uncommon to contract
553 fire/EMS services because they carry the same equipment and operate under the same protocols;
554 just like with fire services. Regarding “do we become a Wilbur” - Mayor Smith stated no, as we
555 would be providing a service to them, not becoming part of them. Regarding district coverage
556 reduction and our current department being heavily tasked - Ms. Witt referred to the current
557 municipal transport agreement, which was voluntary, so that the town could participate in the
558 transport program. Regarding legislative actions - Vice-Mayor Paritsky stated that option is
559 available, we could proceed by speaking with legislators and lobbying for it. Regarding no Union
560 contract - Attorney Mandel stated the union was certified in 2002, a contract was negotiated in
561 2004 (every member of the bargaining unit participated) and they took the contract for a ratification
562 vote and voted it down. They have returned to the bargaining table once with a proposal, the town
563 provided a response, and they have not returned to the bargaining table to negotiate a contract. The
564 Union has not proposed a collective bargaining agreement in fifteen years. Regarding asking the
565 County to assist us with a risk assessment - Director Pozzo stated yes. Regarding the town being
566 given a credit for providing services to Wilbur - Director Pozzo stated that would be part of the
567 discussions and set out in the contract. Regarding addressing issues for which we do not have
568 equipment - Ms. Witt stated municipalities supply one another with equipment when feasible.
569 Regarding saving Home Rule - Vice-Mayor Paritsky stated her concerns with doing something
570 that could affect Home Rule and retaining our standards would be imperative and spelled-out in
571 the contract. Regarding the town’s Chief, Deputy Chief, and Admin personnel - Ms. Witt stated
572 that has not been discussed and any discussion at this point would be premature. Regarding the
573 human factor – Volusia County fire union President Karaginis stated that he grew up in this area
574 and knows Ponce Inlet well and assured that the County’s fire-EMS providers would provide the
575 same professional level of service that the Ponce Inlet residents expect and deserve. Regarding an
576 increase in response times - Director Pozzo explained there is a four minute bleed-time to allow
577 for traffic and only 5 or 6 minutes when going into Wilbur. Regarding driving by an incident along
578 the way - Director Pozzo reiterated that units are obligated to stop if they come upon the scene of
579 an incident, if they determine they are the closest unit to an emergency call, they can choose to
580 respond and would notify dispatch. Vice-Mayor Paritsky noted that more discussion is necessary
581 between the town manager and Director Pozzo to obtain more information and would be placed
582 on a future agenda for discussion. Mayor Smith asked how many guests were on Zoom; Ms. Hugler
583 stated 68. He added that this is a small percentage of the town’s residents and welcomes any ideas
584 to get the information out to more of the public. Director Pozzo stated that Volusia County is
585 neutral; they were asked to participate in this process and offered their complete support and
586 assistance to the town, including providing a risk assessment. He noted that his conversations will
587 continue with the town manager.

588
589 Council authorized the town manager to work with Director Pozzo to gain more information for
590 their further consideration.

591
592 **6. Adjournment.** Vice-Mayor Paritsky adjourned the meeting at 10:13 p.m.

593
594 Respectfully submitted by:

595

596

597 Jeaneen Witt, CMC, Town Manager/Town Clerk

598 Peg Hunt, Assistant Deputy Clerk