

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SITTING AS THE GOVERNING BODY OF FIRE DISTRICT #1**

REGULAR MEETING

JULY 29, 1998

The Regular Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Sedgwick County, Kansas, Sitting as the Governing Body of Fire District #1, was called to order at 10:59 a.m., Wednesday, July 29, 1998, in the County Commission Meeting Room in the Courthouse in Wichita, Kansas, by Chairman Mark F. Schroeder with the following present: Chairman Pro Tem Paul W. Hancock; Commissioner Betsy Gwin; Commissioner Thomas G. Winters; Commissioner Melody C. Miller; Mr. William P. Buchanan, County Manager; Mr. Rich Euson, County Counselor; Mr. Gary Curmode, Fire Chief; Mr. David C. Spears, P.E., Director, Bureau of Public Works; Mr. Fred Ervin, Public Affairs Officer; and Ms. Lisa Davis, Deputy County Clerk.

GUESTS

Karl Peterjohn, 11328 W. Texas, Wichita, KS

ROLL CALL

The Clerk reported, after calling roll, that all Commissioners were present.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES: Regular Meeting, July 8, 1998

The Clerk reported that all Commissioners were present at the Regular Meeting of July 8, 1998.

Chairman Schroeder said, "Commissioners, you've received the Minutes of the meeting, what's the will of the Board?"

MOTION

Commissioner Gwin moved to adopt the Minutes of July 8, 1998.

Commissioner Gwin seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

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VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul W. Hancock	Aye
Commissioner Thomas G. Winters	Aye
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Chairman Mark F. Schroeder	Aye

Chairman Schroeder said, "Thank you. Next item."

PUBLIC HEARING

A. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 1999 FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1 BUDGET.

Mr. William Buchanan, County Manager, said, "Commissioners, you have the budget before you. It was presented in the past. It is time to open the public hearing. This budget requires \$9,553,246 to operate the Fire District this year."

Chairman Schroeder said, "Thank you. At this time, I'll open up the Commission meeting to public hearing. Anybody who would like to be heard on this item, the 1999 Sedgwick County Fire District No. 1 Budget, please come forward. State your name. You're limited to five minutes."

Karl Peterjohn said, "Chairman Schroeder, members of the County Commission, as a resident in the area that has been covered by the Fire District, I stand by my earlier comments and stand for any questions. Thank you."

Chairman Schroeder said, "Okay, thank you. No questions. Other speakers? If not, we'll close the public hearing and limit discussion to bench and staff. Commissioners, what's the will of the Board?"

Commissioner Hancock said, "I notice this year in the Fire District, we have a mill levy increase. I don't think any of it is due to the DeBruce incident. Is part of that coming from there?"

Mr. Buchanan said, "No, it is not."

Commissioner Hancock said, "That's another problem we have to solve between now and January 1, I presume."

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Mr. Buchanan said, "Part of it is going to be solved today."

Commissioner Hancock said, "Okay great. That's good news. The other thing is, I also presume that we will be meeting together with the City to discuss the three joint departments that we share. Has that been arranged, or are we not going to do that this year?"

Mr. Buchanan said, "There has been no sense from this side of the street, or the other side of the street, to do that. I have a message to the City Manager about that, and we're still discussing it."

Commissioner Hancock said, "Well, I will actively lobby this Board not to approve those budgets, unless we meet with the City Council this year. We haven't met with them for a number of years, and I guess I'm getting old and cantankerous, but that's the way I think. We need to discuss those departments together before we fund them. That's our leverage. That's what we do. I think we need to talk about that. The reason I bring that up, is because this department brings to mind those three, and that is, we have on the shelf right now, a study combining these two departments, the Wichita City Fire Department and Fire District No. 1, creating a larger District No. 1. In that study, it creates greater efficiencies, I believe, and I think we need to have a look at that. We have challenged the City a number of times to look at that study and bring to us some suggestions of how we would like to proceed, with absolutely no response whatsoever. We are providing, essentially, city level services in the County, fire protection. That is one reason why we continue to see the cost of that fire protection rise. If the City would truly like to save some money, and I know we would over here, by combining those two departments, I think efficiency is created that could both benefit from. I think the citizens of Sedgwick County deserve better than what they are getting, today, as far as the cost of fire protection is concerned. We did a minor thing, for the public's benefit. We combined maintenance of our fire equipment with the City of Wichita. It was a very simple thing to do. It required a few of our employees going from our motor pool over to their facility and sending our equipment over there. One of the most simple acts to do, we could think of, but it was a gut-wrenching action, by the City Council, to do this. It was incredible. We even had to do it on a trial basis for a year. This is a no brainer, simple. Children do this, but from time to time we can't get the City Council off dead center.

"Now, as far as this budget is concerned, I'm tired of looking at that kind of thing. I know we need it. Fire protection is a basic fundamental function performed by government. Everyone has one. It is time that the City get off center on this thing and have a look at joint protection among the City and the County and lets roll back some of the taxes in this community.

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“ So, this is one of the subjects that I will bring up at our joint meeting, if there are enough votes here to have that sort of thing. Otherwise, I won't vote for the joint departments, to approve them this year. I think we need to talk to the department people, and I think we need to talk to the City about how things are going. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.”

Chairman Schroeder said, “Thank you. Appreciate your comments, because I do have some concern about flood control. I sent all of you a note some time ago, but there are some inconsistencies that we've discovered in the way they serve us in this county, and we really need to discuss that and determine whether we're going to be more particular about what we ask for out of those departments in general, specifically this one too, and how that budget changes and how the scope of work changes without our knowledge. There are a lot of things we need to discuss, concerning those departments, and I agree with Commissioner Hancock. We need to give those more attention, and I hope this year we start to do that, to make everybody more responsible for how we spend taxpayers' money.”

Commissioner Hancock said, “I know our Fire District has less land area to cover than they ever had before, but how busy they are, and the responsibility, and how much it costs to do things, has nothing to do with the land area. It has everything to do with people who happen to be there. There are more people in the unincorporated area in Fire District No. 1 than there ever has been in the history of this County. More calls, more responses, not necessarily more fires. That is something that is actually a small part of what the fire department does. They are responsible for the welfare, and the safety, of folks out there in cases where necessarily crime isn't part of the problem. It is a tremendous responsibility. It is a tremendous responsibility in the City of Wichita. So I would just like to see us move forward on the thing, and let's do what makes sense for over 425,000 people that live in this community.”

Chairman Schroeder said, “Your comments are well taken. I think everybody agrees that we need to be a little bit more aware of what we're doing, and how we're doing it. I have to say, as a side note to your comments, Commissioner Hancock, that some time ago Jerry Harrison, Assistant County Manager and I had a discussion about the Fire District, and he made the comment that was so clear to me, that we're almost working ourselves out of business when it comes to fire suppression, because we've done a good job in educating people on how to prevent fires, smoke alarms, how to use common sense to protect yourself and your family.”

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“ We’re doing the same thing through the Sheriff. The Sheriff has done a great job in crime prevention, with community policing, educating people on how to watch their neighbors, how to take care of themselves better, be more vigilant about their activities. So, we’re trying to do the same in that area when it comes to law enforcement. So, I think the County has done a wonderful job in helping to protect the citizens of this County, and I’m proud of the fact that the Fire Department and Sheriff’s Department have proceeded to do that, and continue to do that. But your comments are well taken. I appreciate you making us aware of those concerns. Commissioners, any other discussion, at this point, with the Fire District Budget? Next item, please.”

B. AUTHORIZATION FOR THE COUNTY MANAGER TO PUBLISH A NOTICE OF HEARING ON THE PROPOSED 1999 SEDGWICK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1 BUDGET.

Mr. Buchanan said, “Commissioners, you have the budget in front of you, I would recommend you adopt the appropriate language and establish the public hearing.”

Chairman Schroeder said, “Okay, thank you. Discussion on this item? If not, somebody wish to make a Motion?”

MOTION

Chairman Schroeder moved to establish the public hearing for August 12, 1998, and authorize the County Manager to publish a Notice of Hearing for the total Fire District No. 1 Budget of \$9,630,651 with \$7,596,278 budgeted in ad valorem taxes or approximately 15.74 mills, an increase of 1.73 mills subject to confirmation of calculations by staff.

Commissioner Hancock seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul W. Hancock	Aye
Commissioner Thomas G. Winters	Aye
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Chairman Mark F. Schroeder	Aye

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Chairman Schroeder said, "Thank you. I understand we do have an Executive Session involving the Fire District, so we're going to recess this meeting and go back to the Regular Meeting."

The Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners recessed to the Regular Meeting at 11:07 a.m. and returned at 1:26 p.m.

Chairman Schroeder said, "I'll call the meeting back to order, the meeting of the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners, sitting as the governing body of the Fire District No. 1. Other business?"

C. OTHER

MOTION

Commissioner Hancock moved that the Board of County Commissioners recess into Executive Session for 20 minutes to consider consultation with Legal Counsel on matters privileged in the Attorney Client relationship relating to legal advice in matters relating to employer/employee negotiations, and that we return no sooner than 1:50 p.m.

Commissioner Gwin seconded the Motion.

There was no discussion on the Motion, the vote was called.

VOTE

Commissioner Betsy Gwin	Aye
Commissioner Paul W. Hancock	Aye
Commissioner Thomas G. Winters	Aye
Commissioner Melody C. Miller	Aye
Chairman Mark F. Schroeder	Aye

Chairman Schroeder said, "Thank you. We're in Executive Session."

The Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners recessed into Executive Session at 1:26 p.m. and returned at 1:59 p.m.

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Chairman Schroeder said, "We're back in session. Let the record reflect there was no binding action taken in Executive Session. Mr. Counselor, do you have anything to add? Mr. Manager? Commissioners? Then we're adjourned."

C. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business to come before the Board, the Meeting was adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS**

MARK F. SCHROEDER, Chairman
Fifth District

PAUL W. HANCOCK, Chairman Pro Tem
Second District

BETSY GWIN, Commissioner
First District

THOMAS G. WINTERS, Commissioner
Third District

MELODY C. MILLER, Commissioner
Fourth District

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ATTEST:

James Alford, County Clerk

APPROVED:

_____, 1998