

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

**REGULAR MEETING**

**August 6, 2003**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of the County Commissioners of Sedgwick County, Kansas, was called to order at A.M., on Wednesday, August 6, 2003 in the County Commission Meeting Room in the Courthouse in Wichita, Kansas, by Chairman Tim Norton; with the following present: Chair Pro Tem Thomas G. Winters; Commissioner David M. Unruh; Commissioner Carolyn McGinn; Commissioner Ben Sciortino; Mr. William P. Buchanan, County Manager; Mr. Rich Euson, County Counselor and Ms. Lisa Davis, Deputy County Clerk.

**GUESTS**

Mr. Jeff Cowley, President, Local 2612 International Association of Firefighters.  
Mr. Dave Thompson, Vice President, Local 2612 International Association of Firefighters.  
Mr. Karl Peterjohn, Kansas Taxpayers Network.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Chairman Norton** said, "Next item."

**PUBLIC HEARING**

- A. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE 2004 SEDGWICK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1 BUDGET.**

**POWERPOINT PRESENTATION**

**Mr. William P. Buchanan**, County Manager, greeted the Commissioners and said, "The recommended budget, Fire District budget is \$11,035,769, 1.26 mill increase. We are going to spend down some of the fund balance over the next several years, reducing the workforce 3-4 positions. The stations, fire stations will remain open. We will begin the study of not only how to redistribute the workforce, but relocate fire stations. House values at \$100,000 the mill levy increased of 1.26 is an impact of about \$14.49 annually.

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District budget . . . I said that already. Personnel benefits are 86% of the budget. Contractual services are 9, commodities 3%, capital improvements 1. As you can see there a little left in inter-fund transfers. They face this financial reality. Also, annexations have reduced the Fire District, both in the area and populations. We need to realign services and we need to think about a station relocation study and our challenge is going to be to continue to provide service with challenging demographics.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would recommend at this point you open the public hearing for the Fire District budget.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “At this point, I’ll open the public hearing and accept any comments from the public. We will limit those comments to five minutes. You will need to state your name and address. Is there anyone that would like to come forward and address the Commission on the 2004 budget for Fire District #1?”

**Mr. Jeff Cowley**, President, Local 2612 Sedgwick County Firefighters International Association, greeted the Commissioners and said, “We’ve discussed before you individually and at different points in time through the last budget. We thank you, on behalf of the members, keeping our stations open. Yes, the fire district is growing but we do have a population still to serve whether that number is going down or going up.

As we stated two weeks ago, that we are on the upturn of the population within the District. Our cities that we serve are growing steadily. We are able to currently deliver those services as the stations are located. In regards to the three positions, once again what I stated two weeks ago still stands. As the amount of staffing dollars is tied into those three positions and keeping our staffing levels at the stations whole. We have had difficulty in the past recent years in keeping the stations 100% staffed with the dollar amounts that we have had. With this reduction, we look to fall into that same predicament.

As the Manager said, we need to look at the station relocation study. In order to do that, that is a cost to the district and to relocate those stations is going to be a cost to the district and by also doing that, we talked about two weeks ago the 1710, NFTA Standard 1710 states for response times and minimum staffing levels on apparatus. We don’t believe the station relocation study that five man stations increased, that’s going to be a cost of personnel. To redistribute those personnel to, if you will, like the Station 31 concept and the Station 38 concept, those are three-person engines and with the 1710 Standard their minimum is four.

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We've had discuss on well there's a squad that will run in tandem with it. Well, in that case that will not be the case. They will be single resources and without having four on that apparatus to arrive on scene at the same time, it limits our ability to perform at the fast attack on structure fires and on other incidents, it limits our ability to efficiently do our jobs.

With that, I will close and we would like to see the station relocation study, but those are the issues that we will face in a short time, after I believe ISO has come in and has done some studies on how we do our business. And with that, that will let us know where we stand and what our next steps are to be and to go forward. So, we want to step forward, we don't want to step back. Once again, I want to thank you for your time and effort and especially Commissioner Winters. You and I've had different conversations in regards to the station in Andale. They are extremely pleased and they thank you and the community out there is extremely happy. So, we're glad to be a part of that community. We work in concert with them and once again, like I said earlier, sometimes it's not all about the money, it's about your job.

I enjoy working every third day, 24 hours, doing what I do. If I did it for the money, I wouldn't be here. I've been a career firefighter for now 18 years and if I plan on getting a clock at some point in time down the road. So, with that I'll close and thank you once again."

**Chairman Norton** said, "Thanks, Jeff. Anyone else like to speak?"

**Mr. Dave Thompson**, Vice President, Local 2612, Sedgwick County Firefighters International Association, greeted the Commissioners and said, "To expand on President Cowley's comments regarding the 2004 budget, I understand a 1.26 mill increase is what's proposed in an effort to maintain that level of funding, I would ask that we maintain that level of a mill increase if at all possible, rather than reducing it to buy down deficit or reduce spending or whatever. We can, as a fire district, justify those expenditures.

The three positions that are anticipated or proposed to eliminate, we currently run 95% of the year, out of 365 days, with four people short. For four people on vacation, sick leave, injury leave, visa versa. We have three fill positions currently today that cover four of the vacancies. So that causes us to pay time and a half to one individual 95% of the time, 365 days a year. So approximately 340 days out of the year we're paying time and a half.

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Our budget, our overtime callback staffing line item within our budget, cannot afford to pay for two. It will cost us an additional 30 to \$40,000 to staff that additional position. It's cheaper to keep those three positions, three employees rather than staffing an additional spot. Running short is not what we call an option. Moving one person from one station so another station runs short is like taking a balanced tire and making it unbalanced. That was used two weeks ago. With that reduction of those three positions, we would need an additional \$150,000 in our staffing line item to cover that second vacancy, as again we're short four people a day 95% of the time.

Added cost for 2004 anticipated that were not really planned was a new temporary station in Haysville to cover the railroad reconstruction efforts that Haysville desperately needs. That's going to be an additional cost out of our budget that we must find approximately \$25,000. On top of that, the Manager has requested that a station relocation study be done, at a maximum cost of approximately \$75,000. New uniform change was recently talked about within our department. For some unknown reason, our administration would like to see us go to navy pants and maroon shirts. That's a cost to our department of \$27,000 for all labor.

With that, the expenditures don't justify the means. We can do the study at the IFF level, with management support and some support from the Commissioners at no cost. That would help our mill levy and would help to keep three positions available. I would request you seriously consider that option, those options and look at that 1.26 mill and keeping those three positions available. Thank you for your time."

**Chairman Norton** said, "Okay. Is there anyone else that would like to speak on the Fire District #1 budget for 2004?"

**Commissioner Sciortino** said, "What station are you with?"

**Mr. Karl Peterjohn**, Kansas Taxpayers Network, greeted the Commissioners and said, "I live in the City of Wichita, although interestingly enough, when I moved into my town, and I should say for the record I'm Karl Peterjohn and I do live in Wichita, but I was for a while paying property taxes for the Sedgwick County Fire District when I first moved into my home.

My most recent bill, that isn't the case. My point is not to repeat what I said earlier, but we're in a situation where we're looking at rising appraisals. To raise the mill levy is very significant and a very negative impact for the folks who have to pay that mill levy and even though it's put as only a relatively modest amount, for businesses and for others they will have to pay more and I hope you would keep that in consideration, along with my earlier remarks. Thank you."

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**Chairman Norton** said, “Thanks. Is there anyone else that would like to speak on the 2004 Fire District #1 budget? Second call, final call, anyone else to speak? I will now close the public hearing and limit the comments to the Bench. I see no lights at the present. Mr. Manager, any other comments?”

**Mr. Buchanan** said, “Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, for the Fire District budget, we also need to pass a resolution providing for the funding of the Fire District, the truth in legislation resolution. We’ve read it already, the same words that we’ve used except we’ve substituted ‘Fire District’. I don’t know whether you want me to read that again or not. I would recommend you adopt this and then move on to adopt the budget.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “I do have some lights flashing, so Commissioner Winters.”

**Commissioner Winters** said, “Thank you very much. Commissioners, I’m certainly going to be supportive of this budget today. And again, I know that it’s one that’s given a number of us a great deal of anxiety and real searching for what the long term answer is going to be for the Fire District. And I know that the Chairman, Mr. Norton has a desire that we really have an in depth workshop talking about Fire District issues and I agree. I think that’s very important.

I believe we need to really take apart every nut and bolt of this organization and reexamine where we need to be located, how we need to be providing, who are our customers, how are we going to make this department viable into the future. Again, I believe that most of you are going to support this recommended budget. I know that the citizens of Andale are very appreciative and this is . . . it is an instance that we realize all of the difficulties that we’ve got in the district, but to give someone a service as important as this and one that means as much to them, in a financial way, as they provide insurance coverage for their businesses and their personal property, this is a big deal.

So I appreciate very much your support, Commissioners, as we move forward here, but know we’ve got a long ways to go before we really have the Fire District in a place where we’re comfortable with it. But your support today will be very much appreciated. Thank you.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “Commissioner Sciortino.”

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**Commissioner Sciortino** said, “Well, I’m going to be totally supportive of the budget that’s been presented to us. Tom hit on something that was proved to be very impact-ful to us. It’s much harder to take something away from somebody once they’ve been given it than it is to maybe make a decision to implement it. And when it comes to Andale, that’s what was real painful. We could argue should the fire station have been put there to begin with, but it was there and they were used to a certain level of service and I’m glad that we were able to try to figure out a way to continue that.

Fire safety, fire prevention is going to be with us forever. People have a right to expect some level of fire protection. Our Fire District is dynamic, it’s changing, the number of people moving in and out of the Fire District changes. There’s always going to be a cost associated to those people that look to us for fire prevention, fire protection. They have a right to believe that they are being taken care of properly. Our firefighters have every right to demand that their safety is protected when they go out and try to provide much needed service to people that they serve, so it’s a balancing act that we continually have to do. I welcome this idea of like we’re talking about having a workshop or thinking out of the box and do we now look at where the fire district is and where the stations are and should we look at relocating the stations to make it more efficient, given the new dimensions of what our fire district is and I’m glad we’re going to do that, because with the cities changing, pretty soon we’re going to wind up with a fire district inside the city limits of Wichita, if we don’t already have something like that and is that right?

And so, I think we do need to have some long-range thinking. I think the efforts that we’ve put forth on this year’s budget is great. Like I say, I’m 100% in support of this, but this isn’t the end. This is just really now a continuation of something that always has to be looked at, should there be a different way that we do things given the new reality. And I’m very happy to be part of a group of elected officials that’s willing to have the courage to do these discussions in public meetings and not behind closed doors. And I am very heartened by what I’ve heard from our bargaining unit that they’re willing to come to the table. President Cowley, Vice President Thompson, who sometimes I misread when he’s talking at the podium, so I apologize for that, but I didn’t know which message I was getting. But the concept is that the bargaining unit is willing to sit down and visit with us too on that, and I think that’s great and that’s how you solve problems, when partners get together and decide to work together to a final solution. So, I’m going to be very supportive of what we’ve done this year. I think it’s good work and it’s going to have my wholehearted support. That’s all I have.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “Commissioner McGinn.”

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**Commissioner McGinn** said, “Well, I’ll be brief. I’m going to support this, but I’m just going to add that this has been a tough year, with the Andale situation too coming up. I guess it’s made me dig a little deeper in the Fire District and trying to learn more about the ISO ratings and looking at the maps where we have fire stations in the past, for the past 20-30 years. Cities have grown and changed, communities and so, I think it’s very important that we look at this again, and it may mean we reshuffle the deck, because there’s a lot of people in the fire district that’s underserved even more than the people at Andale, even without their station, and so I look forward to this workshop and learning more about this and hopefully it’s something we can make this district a little more efficient and not have to raise the mill levy anymore in the future, because as more and more people . . . as the City of Wichita grows, we may be losing some people in our fire district and I think we need to react to that and how we’re going to pay for that. So, that’s all I had.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “Commissioner Unruh.”

**Commissioner Unruh** said, “Well, thank you. I just want to express appreciation for a very strong cooperative effort to come to some resolution for this budget that will be workable. The issue with Station 31, I mean, the closing of that would have provided a lot of funds for us to do some of the things that we think are important, but we made a value judgment there as to what was important and I’m very happy with that and supportive of it.

And so, without just repeating a lot of what’s been said, I just want to say that I’m supportive of this budget as presented to us and ready to move on.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “Well, I have a few perspectives and one of them is that this is a one-year budget and I think by the time we come to next year’s budget, if we have a couple of workshops, we’re going to come to some new beginnings on what the fire district looks like and that maybe we won’t have to have mill increases in the future layers on top of mill increases. And I’ve got to tell you, the way the populations are shifting, I really believe that we’re going to have a real conundrum on our hands in a few years if we don’t take some bold action as a commission.

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I can tell you right now, living in Haysville and understanding that Haysville is the largest population base that buys services from the fire district, because Derby does not and Haysville is the largest city, is that whether you want to believe it or not, what they're paying subsidizes some other parts of the county because they're the largest population base, they have more homes and they have one fire station that serves them and serves them very well, Station 34, but that community, at the growth rate that they're going and they had the 10<sup>th</sup> best growth rate in the state for the last two year, will eventually come to the conclusion and I certainly would as mayor if I was still down there, that once you hit about a 12,000 population, you're going to start looking at building your own fire department, because if that mill levy ekes up too much more up to the 18 mill mark, they could safely and easily provide their own fire service within the city limits of their community and not have to worry about Station 34 responding to somebody in Clearwater or somewhere else and not having the great service right there. So, we have some real tough issues to look at because we already know that Maize is growing. It is maybe a little less served by the fire stations. We also are taking on a very rural complexion in the fire district of miles and miles of homes that are pretty far apart and that's makes it really hard to give that fire service.

One of the things we'll have to talk about and today's not the day, but I'm going to throw it out on the table. As we go through the workshop it says functional consolidation with the City of Wichita. Whether that's a popular issue to be brought forth at budget time or not, it's something that's going to be on our minds that we're going to have to start thinking about because particularly towards the Butler County line, as the little pieces of Sedgwick County go away, it may be that that will be better served by a fire station that's on the fringe that's in Wichita and not by Sedgwick County and we need to be talking about that in the future. That will all come out in the workshop. It's not an item for the budget but it is certainly something that is compounding us, because we continue to look at mill levy increases.

I'm supportive of this budget. I think it's what we have to do for one year but I will not be supportive, if I continue to be a county commissioner for long, of continuing to raise the mill levy 1.26 because I don't think the increased services, at least in the part of the county that I live in, are going to be substantial enough to warrant that kind of mill levy increase.

So, having said that, I would entertain a motion on the truth in taxation resolution."

**Commissioner Winters** said, "Mr. Chairman, in regards to the fire district's truth in taxation resolution, the 2004 budget would require the imposition of \$9,680,439 of ad valorem taxes. This amount of property tax requires us to adopt the truth in taxation resolution."

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**MOTION**

Commissioner Winters moved to adopt the Resolution.

Commissioner Unruh seconded the Motion.

**Chairman Norton** said, “Any discussion?”

**Commissioner Sciortino** said, “Yes, I’d like to ask the County attorney, do we have to read a new resolution, or we said adopt a truth in taxation budget, do we have to make any reference to the fact that we’ve already read one into the record, or what do you want us to do there?”

**Mr. Richard Euson**, County Counselor, said, “I think the record shows that you have a copy before you and the record also shows that that copy has wording that’s identical to the wording that was read in the Regular Agenda and so I think you may proceed.”

**Commissioner Sciortino** said, “Okay, thank you.”

**Chairman Norton** said, “Clerk, call the roll.”

**VOTE**

Commissioner David M. Unruh	Aye
Commissioner Thomas Winters	Aye
Commissioner Carolyn McGinn	Aye
Commissioner Ben Sciortino	Aye
Chairman Tim Norton	Aye

**Chairman Norton** said, “Next item.”

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**B. ADOPTION OF THE 2004 FIRE DISTRICT #1 BUDGET.**

**MOTION**

Commissioner Winters moved to adopt the 2004 Fire District #1 total budget of \$11,164,248. The total budget includes a legal budget of \$11,154,248 with \$9,341,623 in budgeted ad valorem taxes, or approximately 16.67 mills, subject to review and technical adjustments.

Commissioner Unruh seconded the Motion.

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

**VOTE**

Commissioner David M. Unruh	Aye
Commissioner Thomas Winters	Aye
Commissioner Carolyn McGinn	Aye
Commissioner Ben Sciortino	Aye
Chairman Tim Norton	Aye

**Chairman Norton** said, "Next item. Anything else to come before us as a Fire District? If not, I will adjourn the Fire District Meeting."

**C. OTHER**

**D. ADJOURNMENT TO ITEM G OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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There being no other business to come before the Board, the Meeting was adjourned at 12: 19 p.m.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
**TIM NORTON**, Chairman  
Second District

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**THOMAS G. WINTERS**, Chair Pro Tem  
Third District

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**DAVID M. UNRUH**, Commissioner  
First District

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CAROLYN McGINN**, Commissioner  
Fourth District

\_\_\_\_\_  
**BEN SCIORTINO**, Commissioner  
Fifth District

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Don Brace**, County Clerk

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_, 2003