

Pasco County Mosquito Control District

2308 Marathon Road, Odessa FL 33556

Minutes of Board Meeting

August 13, 2024

Call to Order

Chairman Evans called the Pasco County Mosquito Control District Board meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Evans led the Pledge of Alliance to the Flag.

Roll Call

Commissioner Evans called the roll. Chairman Evans and Secretary Abbott were in person; while Treasurer Cox was present remotely

District Staff; Executive Director Rogers, Nick McFaul, Edwin Martinez, Jose Freundt, Karen Mojica, Maria Johnson, and Lindsay O'Reilly

Additional remote attendees includes; Lina Castro from Invision Advisors, Shawn Foster, Sunrise Consulting Group, and Laura Donaldson, Esq., Manson Bolves, Donaldson, Tanner, PA.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Abbott motioned to approve the agenda; all approved.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Abbott motioned to approve the consent agenda; all approved.

Public Comment

Commissioner Evans called for public comment.

Gary Joiner

Mr. Joiner stated he has resided in Pasco County for 65 years and is a candidate for the Pasco County Mosquito Control District Commission. He started with making a comment about the drone the District has presented to purchase. He continued by stating that he has met with a lot of people about it, and they have said that this is one of the best things we can do is buy a drone, but they have questioned "why we need such a large one." Mr. Joiner said he met with Sheriff Nocco about the use of drones for mosquito control along with the hiring of a drone pilot at sixty thousand dollars/year to start with, plus benefits. He said that Sheriff Nocco stated there is no need to spend that kind of money when you have two pilots. Mr. Joiner continued by saying that Sheriff Nocco stated that his pilots operate all their drones, and they don't have a special drone pilot. He also stated that the Sheriff said to Mr. Joiner that he could tell him for sure that our two pilots do not work a full forty-hour week flying. He continued by saying that the Sheriff said that five months out of the year is all the pilots mostly fly. Mr. Joiner reiterated this was Sheriff Nocco's saying and not his, that he was just "repeating what Sheriff Nocco said". Mr. Joiner stated that "evidentially Sheriff Nocco has done his homework and his suggestion is to train the pilots we have and save some taxpayer dollars." He then said the Sheriff told him the

District should work with Moffit Cancer Center and move the campus there on their helipad. Furthermore, Mr. Joiner said he has “spoken with 99% of all Elected Officials in Pasco County including the County Commissioners all the way to the Congressman.” He stated there is “not a one of them in favor of building the [newly proposed mosquito control] complex.” He then said “there is a lot of rumor going around what is going to happen and that he doesn’t know anything except what he is told and a lot of it, he is keeping to himself for the time being.” He then proceeded to talk about the helicopters. He stated “we need them, but we do not need the large helicopters that we have, and we need to get rid of them, buy two smaller ones and we can cover the areas that are not being covered. I can show you ten swamps right now that has not been sprayed in three years since we got these helicopters.” Mr. Joiner said these are his suggestions, that is what we need to do, to save the taxpayers money.

Cathy Julian

Ms. Julian stated she lives in Port Richey, Florida. She stated she has noticed in her community page on Facebook there has been a lot of rumbles about mosquitoes and that they have called Mosquito Control, and they have done a great job. She said people have said they have had a lot of them, but she hasn’t noticed them, but she stated “they must be up because of all the rain we have had.” She continued by stating someone sent something to her this week that had been submitted to the County for the new building. They were asking her why it was submitted in January, and it is not approved yet. She was asking if that’s “normal or just how long it takes to get approved, as that was like seven months ago.” Commissioner Evans stated, “that’s just Government.” Ms. Julian asked “they don’t work any faster even though you’re under a Government agency, so they just put you on hold like they do everyone else?” She continued by asking “what has been submitted, is that to get the approval to build the project?” and that she “was just curious and it will probably be touched on later but that a couple people had said that to her and she did not know where this came from.” She said she “didn’t really understand it, so thought she would ask.”

Commissioner Evans stated, “they move fast when they want to.” Ms. Julian responded, “for some reason they don’t want to move fast.”

New Business

A. Used Tires Discussion – Director of Pasco County Solid Waste

Commissioner Abbott introduced this topic because the District regularly collects used tires from the community to dispose of the properly. Used tires can serve as breeding habitat for vector mosquito species. Staff pull tires from various habitats throughout the county. Commissioner Abbott invited members from Pasco County’s Solid Waste Management to join the meeting to discuss initiatives they have regarding used tires. Further discuss on collaboration ensued.

A. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Amendment

Executive Director Rogers presented a budget amended and there was discussion on the item. Commissioner Abbott motioned that the District move four hundred thousand dollars from capital outlay into the chemical category to make an immediate purchase of the chemicals required; all approved.

Unfinished Business

A. Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Draft

Executive Director Rogers reported on the task the Board asked her to perform attempting to reduce the Budget to accommodate a decrease in tax levy for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The Executive Director stated that Commissioner Cox specifically asked staff to go back and not just take the rollback millage

rate, but to look beyond that to a more meaningful reduction in the tax rate. She reminded the Commissioners the rollback rate is 0.2360 and the draft budget they have in hand actually reflects a reduced millage beyond the rolled back rate to 0.2260, which reduces the Districts revenue from taxes by over five hundred thousand dollars. Commissioner Cox shared he would like to see a reduction in the investment account and the reduction then applied to the upcoming fiscal year budget which would allow the District to lower the taxes even further. Further discussion was had between Commissioners and Executive Director Rogers. Commissioner Cox pointed out that he had asked for a meaningful reduction to the budget and commended Ms. Rogers for delivering that to the Commissioners. However, he is now looking to further reduce taxes even more. Director Rogers cautioned the Board that if the District reduced by a million and a half next year, assuming we use the ten million dollars set aside for the building of the campus this will reduce our revenue below expenditures and questioned the sustainability of this decision for impacting the following fiscal year. Rogers stated that she is very confident in the level that she has in the draft with a little over a half million dollars reduction and we will be able to continue to provide the same level of service that our Pasco County residents have come to expect from us. She further shared that this would continue to protect public health adequately but that an additional million-dollar reduction in revenue is not going to put the District in that same position. Commissioner Abbott suggested to dig more into detail with the staff to find out what number is the best for all to agree on. Director Rogers stated she would like more time to run the numbers and look at the projection for next year to make sure it would be sustainable. She reminded the Commissioners that we are running up to the end of our budget cycle as September 4, 2024, is our first budget hearing, so this needs to be sorted out before that date. Commissioner Cox shared that he is very pleased that we are delivering a tax reduction to our Pasco County citizens and is not aware of any other local government that is looking to reduce taxes and the only way you can say you are reducing taxes is to lower the tax rate below the rollback rate. Commissioner Cox stated he is very proud of the District staff for doing that and providing that relief and does not want to impact the level of service but also believes there is little bit more room for reduction. Final thoughts from Ms. Rogers were to have a special Board meeting prior to the September 4, 2024, first budget hearing. This is proposed so all can agree on a tentative budget number. All Commissioners agreed and a special Board meeting date was set for Wednesday August 28, 2024 at 1:00 P.M at the District office.

Note: Mr. Joiner, a member of the public in the meeting, interrupted the Board meeting outside of public comment and addressed the Board Chairman on a “comment that has to do with the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Draft just talked about.” Commissioner Evans clearly stated he would have to do that after the meeting, as public comment was over. Mr. Joiner stated “no, as this is very important.” Mr. Joiner continued to state that “last night on the news they were talking about the housing market has fallen ten percent in the State of Florida and the price of homes has fell twenty percent in the State of Florida. This is something the Commissioner might consider when they are talking about the budget.”

B. Board Composition Discussion

Discussion on the composition of the District Board and the number of commissioners occurred. Currently, the District has 3, non-partisan elected Board member who serve at-large. Shawn Foster and Laura Donaldson, Esq. provided options for consideration in moving forward and finding the best solution for this issue.

General Information

A. New Campus Update, Invision Advisors

Lina Castro stated the District have been in permitting for approximately seven months and the site submittal is in with Pasco County to address an earlier comment from the public. She stated a need to execute permit extensions both with Pasco County and SWFWMD. Executive Director Rogers then stated for the record that the District is having to apply for these extensions now because of the political concerns. She further stated this is added work, additional time and costing the taxpayers additional resources. Ms. Castro also reported that the General Contractor request for prequalification solicitation is active the submission closes on August 30, 2024. In the following weeks the District along with Invision Advisors, will open those packages to determine if the firms who apply are qualified to perform the work. After prequalification, those who meet the criteria will then be invited to present a hard bid for construction.

B. Director's Report and District Operations, A. Rogers

Executive Director Rogers started her report by reminding everyone in the room or abroad that if you make public records request it must be specific and concise as the District is obligated and does provide documents precisely how they are requested. The District will always comply as required per Statute. Ms. Rogers informed Mr. Joiner, a member of the public at the meeting, that unfortunately he was not at the Board meeting last month to hear the presentation she made of all the data showing how much the District's helicopters were utilized. The aircraft have performed more aerial operations than in past years as District staff have worked to find new mosquito habitat, have seen an increase in arbovirus activity, and are providing increase coverage of known treatment areas. She provided extensive data on the use of the particular aircraft model and it's use in the aviation world as being a utility ship. Ms. Rogers stated that she would be happy to discuss with Sheriff Nocco the appropriate information, exactly how District aircraft fly and show him the data so that he can be looking at facts instead of conjecture and misinformation. She continued by stating District operations are congruent with best management practice in the mosquito control industry. She reiterated that if anyone has questions or concerns, she is happy to sit down and show that specific data to provide a more thorough understand of the facts on how the District is utilizing the aircraft. Ms. Rogers then spoke on the significance of the used tire discussion earlier in the meeting as used tires serve as a breeding site for *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* which are two primary disease vector mosquito species found in Pasco County for Dengue, Zika, and Chikungunya. The District picks up the used tires that are on the roadside, dumped on properties and in homeowners yard, but the District has to pay a fee for that. Ms. Rogers wanted to highlight the public health implication of the discussion. Executive Director Rogers reported on the abundance and increased rainfall over the last couple of months, especially with the latest storm, Hurricane Debby and subsequent rainfalls thereafter each day which after where we really see the major mosquito hatch-offs. The District has been very busy with greatly increased call volume for service and staff are performing their best to keep up with the resources that we have. She proceeded to share that each year, this year in particular, we have been receiving an increasing number of notices of suspected mosquito-borne disease cases from the FL Department of Health. Mosquito borne disease is on the rise across the globe due to increased urbanization and globalization, which causes these viruses that are transmitted by mosquitoes to be found in new areas at an increasing frequency. People are traveling to areas where the diseases are endemic at a much higher rate than we have seen before. The Director guided the Commissioner to their Board packet with the seven arbovirus disease cases that we responded to in the month of July alone. She further explained the extensive protocol the District takes after the FL Department of Health notifies of a suspected case. The Pasco County

Mosquito Control District responds immediately with boots on the ground, traps being set for surveillance, looking for the disease vectors, ULV adulticide applications or aerial adult mosquito missions with the next couple of days, and ground and aerial larvicide applications. She further explained that our response protocol for continuing surveillance and necessary control in those areas can be several weeks depending on the vector species and virus. This then pulls staff and resources away from making treatments in other areas as disease presence must become the main focus. The priority is for protecting public health. Ms. Rogers then introduced the new District hires. Lastly, Director Rogers updated the board on the annual evaluations process, banking services and chemical bid packages, and items to review prior to the next Board meeting.

C. Community Outreach and Education Report, M. Johnson

Maria Johnson gave an update on community engagement and outreach activities.

D. Safety Report, N. McFaul

Nick McFaul reported no safety or incidents this month. He stated ongoing training is every Wednesday including safety training and a presentation of "mosquito of the week" by the Entomology team. Mr. McFaul also shared news on a new emerging mosquito-borne disease that is making it's way to Florida called Oropouche virus. There have already been some travel-related cases coming from Cuba, much like how Zika came to the United States.

E. Arbovirus Report, A. Prasuskas

Director Rogers provided the arboviral activity throughout the state and withing Pasco County.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Evans thanked the staff for all they are doing in keeping Pasco safe. He commended Nick McFaul in making sure everything is good operational order with the District. The Commissioner thanked the team for all they do and for the Executive Director wearing all her different hats and getting the new build out going, hard work on the budget, and keeping us all safe. He concluded this item by stating "it doesn't cost any money to say 'Thank You' for what you are doing."

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Commissioner Evans reported on dates of upcoming meetings as part of the Agenda with the following:

ADDED: Special Board meeting – Wed, August 28, 2024 1:00PM

Meeting Adjournment

Commissioner Evans motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:53 A.M.; all approved.

Meeting Adjourned.

Date: 18 SEPTEMBER 2024

Attested: _____

