

# **Pasco County Mosquito Control District**

**2308 Marathon Road, Odessa FL 33556**

## **Minutes of Special Board Meeting**

**August 28, 2024**

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Evans called the Pasco County Mosquito Control District Board Special Meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Evans led the Pledge of Alliance to the Flag.

### **Roll Call**

Commissioner Evans called the roll.

Chairman Evans, Secretary Abbott, Treasurer Cox were all present.

District staff present: Executive Director Rogers, Nick McFaul, Jose Freundt, Maria Johnson, and Lindsay O'Reilly

### **Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Cox motioned to approve the agenda; all approved.

### **Consent Agenda**

N/A for this Special Board Meeting

### **Public Comment**

Commissioner Evans called for public comment.

#### Cathy Julian

Ms. Julian stated she had a question regarding the last meeting the Board mentioned lowering the property taxes by about a half million dollars, "which is great, I appreciate that, and I think all the tax payers in the County thinks that's awesome." She was further curious if that was from the rollback rate or from the rate from last year. Commissioner Cox stated, "yes, on both." Ms. Julian asked "so, it's from the rollback rate and you are lowering it by a half million dollars?" The Commissioners responded by stating that discussion is why this special board meeting was called for today. Ms. Julian stated she asked for a copy of "things" but didn't see it this morning before she left her office.

#### Gary Joiner

Mr. Joiner signed up to speak during public comment. Commissioner Evans called on Mr. Joiner to speak. Mr. Joiner stated, "Nah, I'll pass."

### **New Business**

N/A for this Special Board Meeting

## Unfinished Business

### A. Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Draft

Executive Director Rogers reported that the District Board directed staff to investigate potentially bringing the millage down even further beyond the rate proposed at the last Board meeting, was already reduced beyond the rollback rate. She stated the last budget draft was presented with a millage rate of 0.2260 mils, the rollback rate is 0.2360 mils. The Director stated that the rate they see reflected in today's budget draft is 0.2242, so that is even a further reduction. Commissioner Cox recalled that at the last Board meeting he was pushing for more cuts, and he has had several meetings with the Executive Director and Finance Director. He proceeded to compliment them for being good stewards of taxpayers' dollars. He shared the tax rate is an important thing to really watch and continue to be good stewards. The Commissioner referenced his own personal trim notice, and stated the tax rates that the taxing authorities are implementing on him, the major ones are the County and the School Board. He further shared that all those are resulting in the same millage rate, which is a tax increase. Commissioner stated that with the tentative rates published, only the District and SWFWMD are the only two taxing entities where his taxes will be less money than they were last year. And now the District's tax rate represents a 12 percent reduction, stating "there is not another taxing entity in Pasco County that can say that. Not one." He further stated that he was very proud of the staff and the direction the Board has pushed everyone. He finished by stating he thinks it's a workable budget, but most importantly it is not a budget that is going to jeopardize the public safety. "That is our function. To protect public health." He also clarified this does not cut into any of the operations of the District. Commissioner Abbott stated he is support of it and has had a chance to talk to the Director and certainly in agreement to it. Commissioner Abbott asked for an adjustment to the waste tire fee and there was discussion. Commissioner Cox motioned to accept the final draft of the 2024-2025 budget with the correction of Line Item 49.1.04 to go to eight thousand dollars and the capital outlay be adjusted to accomplish that. Commissioner Abbott and Commissioner Cox reiterated the millage rate will then be 0.2242 which is a reduction of 11.9% from the current millage rate. All approved.

## General Information

N/A for this Special Board Meeting

## Good of the Order

Executive Director Rogers wished to go on record regarding some criticism, more misinformation, and lies sent to the Board of County Commissioners and Pasco Legislative Delegates regarding the Pasco County Mosquito Control District activities post Hurricane Debby. The Director shared that when Hurricane Debby came through it produced a lot of rainfall and there were subsequent rainfall events happening several days thereafter. Ms. Rogers reminded the Board that earlier this year Pasco was experiencing drought conditions, which increases potential for mosquito-borne diseases transmission. Rogers proceeded by educating the room about the abundance of eggs laid on surfaces above high-water marks that can lay dormant for years, just waiting for the next major storm event or tidal surge. When that happens, millions of mosquitoes hatching off at the same time. She stated that when Hurricane Debby came, when that big storm event finally arrived, those hundreds of millions of eggs hatched off at one time. "This obviously makes things very unpleasant for quality of life. But it also increases the potential for mosquito borne disease transmission." Director Rogers stated that especially when we are talking about mosquito vector species. One of the species, *Culex nigripalpus*, is one of the most abundant species collected in our traps since the Hurricane and is a primary disease vector. She further explained that three weeks prior to the storm the average trap collection for *Culex nigripalpus* for all the



routine traps was 347 per trap per day, for an average. Since the storm came through, on August 26, 2024, not even a full three weeks for comparison the average trap collection is now up to 1272 per CDC trap, per day. That increase is 266.57% in that one species alone, and that is not even total mosquito abundance, just one disease-vector species. She continued sharing that the eight inches that fell on August 4<sup>th</sup> through August 5<sup>th</sup> was then followed by subsequent inches received from rainfall after the storm and high tidal surges, it is not the single event that is the concern, as now we have hatch off from the first day of the outer bands of the storm now they are laying more eggs, and laying more eggs. "The situation increases exponentially. As a result, there has been an incredible influx in service requests, for example one and half weeks prior to the storm a total of one hundred eight calls, were received by the District, which is normal this time of year. In the two weeks following the storm, the service calls skyrocketed to 588. That is an increase in service request calls volume 351.885%. She stated responding to individual property owner service requests takes between 35 to 95 minutes per property. If you average that out, that's about 65 minutes each property. She emphasized that's one inspector going to an individual's house to conduct surveillance, educate the homeowner and dump their 5-gallon buckets and plant trivets, emptying water-holding containers. She stated "we have 12 technicians and if we had each one of them spending their entire day responding to individual service requests that would take them away from treating much larger areas where that inspector could be more effective at killing billions of mosquitoes, In the 5 acre cypress swamp behind the neighborhood, for example! It is in everyone best interest, the interest of protecting public health, that we focus our limited resources on wide area, neighborhood inspections and control at this time, while we are working to get mosquito populations back to a tolerable level." By law the District is not obligated to perform mosquito control efforts on individual properties and the District was created in 1951 to perform wide area mosquito control applications for the betterment of human and animal health. As a courtesy, the District provides that service to residents and has maintained a high level of rapid, quality service over past years. Many mosquito control programs throughout the state don't do individual service requests, they simply don't do it as they don't have the resources. She added that when her administrative staff have answered the increased calls, and provide the factual information, people understand they have a personal responsibility to protect themselves from mosquito exposure and to help in removing water-holding containers around their properties. She expressed that District staff have continued to answer calls each day and that information to the contrary is just not factual. The District has been posting planned adulticide applications on the website each night, which is also contrary to lies being shared throughout the community. The only portion that was not available on the website temporarily is where an individual types in their address and enters a service request. Information regarding treatment areas were still being posted each day as well as where treatments have occurred over the last seven days prior. These measures were in place for 10 days and the District has since resumed normal operations. "We have done more aerial adulticide missions this year than we have done in at least the last 10 years and have drastically increased our treatments for larvicide as well" said Executive Director, Rogers. Rogers reiterated it is simply not true that the District has not been providing service after the hurricane, not protecting public health, and not answering the phones or posting information on the website. She stated she wanted to be very clear that District staff are doing everything possible to minimize the potential for mosquito borne disease in the wake of Hurricane Debby and to improve quality of life by getting mosquito populations back to a tolerable level. Commissioner Cox stated, "some people are not concerned about facts and just want to tear other people down." He concluded there was a mass hatch off and the Director has taken an approach to treat all areas in the county and has done the appropriate reaction to what has happened. Commissioner Abbott had some suggestions on ways the residents could put in requests and Executive Director Rogers responded accordingly.

Commissioner Evans finished and stated he appreciated all the District was doing to keep the public safe along with Commissioner Cox with the help of further reducing the budget.

**Upcoming Meetings and Events**

Commissioner Evans reported on dates of upcoming meetings as listed on the Agenda.

**Meeting Adjournment**

Commissioner Cox motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:12 P.M.; all approved.

Meeting Adjourned.

Date:

18 September 2024

Attested:

[Handwritten Signature]