MINUTES
Ad Hoc Committee on Fire/Rescue Study
Council Conference Room
August 18, 2011
9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Allen, Chairman; Jody Prince and Paul Prince. Also present were Brent Schulz and James Frazier.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: John Weaver; Arrigo Carotti; Westley Sawyer; Laura Showe; Gary Alderman; Julie Suggs and Paul Whitten.

In accordance with the FOIA, notices of the meeting were provided to the press stating the time, date, and place of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Allen called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

INVOCATION: Mr. P. Prince gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mr. J. Prince made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. P. Prince. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. J. Prince moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. P. Prince. The motion passed.

Committee Discussion:

Mr. Whitten stated that the Fire Efficiency Study was prepared by TriData. They had a competitive bid and they were the vendor chosen. They were a division of System Planning Corp. It took about seven months. They came down numerous times and had multiple visits and interviews with large numbers of people. The county paid approximately $97,000 for the study which began in September 2007 and was published in April of 2008. It was posted to the county web-site at that time.

At the last meeting the committee asked him to be prepared to talk through the first three sections of the study. Section 1 was the easiest because it was the introduction. The document started with an Executive Summary but went into six major sections. Section 1 discussed the scope of work. They obviously had a specific scope of work and what they were and were not looking at. There were certain things not included so that was outlined and was in the document talking about the specific issues they were involved in. The study process was just an explanation of how they did it. They talked about their team members. They came down and talked about various statistical gathering. They gathered data, spoke to people, did interviews with Council members, spoke with firefighters, administration and volunteer firefighters. They had a pretty wide section of interviews they conducted. That section was an overview of Fire/Rescue. It was just a brief section where they talked about Horry County Fire/Rescue as a combination career and volunteer entity. It talked about the size and structure with the number of stations they had at that time. The study was in 2008 so obviously there had been some changes. The next one was a background on the county and was some demographics, the size of the county, how large it was and basically some of the structure and
how many people there were. It was fairly simple. The organization part of the report was really where it started talking about management, organization, demand analysis and so forth. He would be going through those on an individual basis. Section 1 was pretty much an introduction to get the process started.

Section 2 was where they started to get into the meat of the discussion. They started with an overview and what they called code questions. It was where they started discussing the 1984 ordinance and the fact that, in their opinion, the county had not created a new ordinance changing that 1984 ordinance. That was the issue and they acknowledged that the budget was an annual document that was an ordinance and in his mind it addressed a number of the issues they had with the 1984 ordinance. They discussed that and their recommendation was that they address the 1984 ordinance in some fashion.

The Fire/EMS budgets had a pretty lengthy discussion outlining how the county funded Fire/Rescue. It was actually two budgets. The EMS budget, which was in the general fund, was a countywide fund. The ambulance service was a countywide jurisdiction. They had a responsibility to deliver EMS services countywide. The fire service was funded from a separate millage for the unincorporated areas minus the area covered by Murrells Inlet/Garden City Fire District. They did not pay the Horry County rural fire millage. They had their own system.

Mr. Allen said at the last meeting the committee asked Mr. Weaver to ask Mr. Sawyer to attend the meeting that day. He asked Mr. Sawyer to explain the difference between the two budgets and why there were still two physical budgets even though they had merged.

Mr. Sawyer said not knowing what he had asked for he had not prepared anything. When the departments merged over the last three to four years, staff looked at various ways they could merge the budget. It was the desire of the chief to merge the budget so he would have only one to manage. The problem was they had two sets of taxpayers. They had taxpayers that did not pay the fire millage but paid money that supported EMS. Mr. J. Prince said countywide. Mr. Sawyer said that everybody in the county paid to fund EMS. Mr. Allen said for example it would be like Myrtle Beach City paid EMS taxes but did not pay fire taxes. Mr. Sawyer said that was correct. Their concern was that some taxpayers would claim they were paying more because of the other service. Years ago EMS had a 4.5 mil budget, when it was a commission. They looked at that as kind of a base marker for a support base and it still appeared to be an adequate number but that would be a countywide millage. As the merger progressed, part of the problem was that people were not just doing one service. They tried to look at a base transfer in the year of the merger, it was how many dollars, what was the countywide millage equivalence and how to hold them at the countywide millage equivalence but they never could get anything that would basically pass the smell test. They continued to fund the EMS side with countywide millage and the fees earned and they funded the fire side on unincorporated millage only.

Mr. P. Prince said it would be really hard to put all the millage into just Fire/Rescue millage budget by itself because they did countywide with EMS but did the unincorporated with the fire. Mr. Sawyer said what they also looked at was basically two EMS budgets. One would mirror the unincorporated area where that millage could possibly be combined, and then a separate EMS budget for the stations that were basically in the cities. They all knew that the stations in the city did
not just respond to city residents so they were right back to the same issue and that was their problem.

Mr. J. Prince asked about other counties. Mr. Sawyer did not know of any county that had one countywide unincorporated fire district. They had all those small volunteer districts, for the most part, or they had municipal services that basically covered the county in some of the big cities. Mr. P. Prince said it was hard to find a county in the state that they could compare with, correct?

Chief Alderman said besides Horry County there were only two other counties in the state that operated their fire department and EMS combined. Colleton County was doing it and he could not remember the other county. He knew there were counties that wanted to do it. He knew that Lexington County wanted to do it because they had talked with them. Richland County and the City of Columbia were working it out. The City of Columbia actually provided fire protection to Richland County. As far as Fire/Rescue, Horry County was the first to do it. Then there had been two others that had followed but there were a lot of other ones interested. The problem was that the EMS people did not want to be on the fire side. That was the same problem they had in the very beginning.

Mr. Allen said currently the only city operation they had in the county that provided EMS would be Myrtle Beach City Fire Department. Chief Alderman said Myrtle Beach City and Garden City provided the area down there and then Myrtle Beach City supplied two medic units as needed. Mr. Allen asked how that fit in with the county fire department or EMS tax situation as far as them providing EMS service for the city with the county also providing it because he had heard that they shifted some of the tax funds to them to pay for their ambulances. He was just asking to clarify.

Mr. Sawyer said it went back to the same thing that Mr. Foxworth had always pointed out. The county level services were at one level and municipalities were formed to enhance services. If they wanted a greater level of service, which apparently they did, they started supplying EMS. Mr. Allen said but they were still at the same level of service to the city and they had not changed that or shifted it towards or away from them. Chief Alderman said they had added medic units in the last four years because of the call volume. It would be nice to have more but unfortunately they didn’t. They had 19 fulltime units in Horry County. They actually tried to put an additional unit out there in the summertime. Myrtle Beach had two that supplemented the county, Garden City supplemented with one that they dedicate, just like they would go down there because they were in the city all the time. They were there to supplement the county. He thought that by law the county was obligated to provide EMS service to the residents. Mr. Allen said just to clarify the rumor that had surfaced Horry County had not bought any medic units for the City of Myrtle Beach.

Mr. Whitten said he would like to clarify that and give them the background. Several years ago there was some discussion in the City of Myrtle Beach about the termination of them providing ambulances. It was prudent on the county for them to stand back and say what if their Council took that political action and they parked those two ambulances. Could the county step up and fill that hole because they provided a valuable service. The answer was no, not because he did not have the people but because he did not have the ambulances…the capital structure. In some discussions they had there was an agreement between the county and the City of Myrtle Beach that they would give them $25,000 per year to continue to provide ambulance service but in the event they terminated it
they could have it as capital. There was a cost in there depending on the age and all that stuff that they would do that but it would give the county the ability to assume that capital so they could restripe it and put it back on the street and provide ambulance service at the level they had that day. That was the fear they had that they were going to close that. He asked Chief Alderman if those numbers were accurate. Mr. J. Prince said they would be legally obligated to provide it anyway. Mr. P. Prince asked if they were still doing that. Mr. Whitten said yes.

Mr. Allen said so it was only $25,000 per year. Mr. Whitten said each unit and there were two units so the total was $50,000. Chief Alderman said they would belong to the county if they said they were not providing the service any longer. Mr. Allen asked what was the cost if they had to purchase a new ambulance. Chief Alderman said about $125,000. Mr. Allen said so it was a great offset. It was actually leaning in the county’s favor he guessed. Chief Alderman said they did not have to pay for the man power either.

Mr. Whitten said another statement in the efficiency study, and it was the opinions of some other people, he did not agree with some of the things they said and one of those things was in this section. They made a recommendation that they draw a line at US 701 and establish separate levels of service so if they were east of Hwy 701 they basically got career firefighter protection of that level, and if they were west of that line they got a reduced level of service. Their feeling was that because the revenue generated in those areas was the driving factor. The disagreement he had, and he could only speak for himself, was the property owners were paying the same amount of taxes on the east and west side and they were going to get a reduced level of service. Their answer was, and the term they had used was, an equivalent level of service. Equivalent because if they were in the restaurant row area and there was a structure fire, they were probably going to need a tower and higher equipment to fight that urban environment. If they were in the country, they were going to need a tanker. Restaurant row really did not need tankers and the country did not need ladder trucks so they approached that by everyone paying the same tax rate and should get equivalent level of service. That was an area he had a disagreement with efficiency study people who wrote it. If Council chose to do that they could have them degrade the service on the west and shift those resources to the east. That was an option. He felt that was relevant because that was one of their fundamental issues. They felt it was where the money was generated that should get the service.

Mr. P. Prince said they could not do that without raising millage on the west side could they…if they kept the service at the same level? Mr. Whitten said that would be his response, yes.

Chief Alderman said his recommendation was they did not even want to think about that. In all honesty it was a nightmare to figure out what was going financially and it was not fair. It was not fair to the people on that side of the county. They had to provide services and respond to fires no matter where they were.

Mr. J. Prince said he had read the report over and over and had come to a conclusion of what perspective it came from. He certainly saw it differently than Chief Alderman, from a different prospective anyway, he was pretty much in agreement that a lot of it came from a completely different prospective than he looked at it. They were not looking at it like a representative looked at it. Mr. Whitten said he would hate to be representing people that lived on both sides of Hwy 701 and explain to them why they paid the same taxes and got less. Chief Alderman said when they
looked at it they were going to lose their ISO ratings and they definitely did not want that to happen. They spent a lot of time and effort to reduce their ISO so they could get an insurance break. The average person had a $300 insurance break because they were nines and now they were fives. He said please don’t make them do that.

Mr. J. Prince said it was just a good example of an outside study group verses an inside study group that had some passion to want to make everything better and he would rather have one inside the county any day.

Mr. Whitten thought it was valid that they heard those kinds of options so they saw all the options on the table so they knew that they had vetted their decisions as a Council and they knew what the options were. On the scope there were some things not included. ISO ratings were not part of their world. When he spoke to them, he said something about ISO and they said they did not deal with ISO, they were just talking their business. In the early 2000’s ISO was huge. ISO nines and tens affected homeowner insurance premiums. Mr. J. Prince said it about doubled it. Mr. Whitten said so Council made it a priority for them to address the ISO issue. Some of the decisions they made were ISO driven where that group did not give that any consideration. They said that up front. Mr. J. Prince said it was a good starting point but it was an expensive starting point.

Mr. P. Prince said they had 70,000 more residents living in Horry County than they did ten years ago. They still had about 38 fire stations and 300 fulltime and less than 200 volunteers. Chief Alderman said the members were around 200. Mr. P. Prince said those were the kind of things he was there for. They had to do something to make things more efficient. They had a tiger by the tail and they had to get more volunteers if they were going to get the level of service they were after.

Mr. Allen said speaking to that point, they had voted to start a volunteer coordinator. When was that position supposed to be filled? Chief Alderman said since he had been chief, and he had been chief for eight or nine years, he put a field person in that position doing the job. He had to take somebody that was in the field working and bring them in to that position. The first one was John Wayne Tyler and in his later years that was what he did. After he retired he took another person from the field and brought him in because he thought it was important. It was not just an Horry County problem. The area he originally came from had probably 3,000 volunteers at one time and it was down to 1,000. Currently Shane Prince, a firefighter and EMT, was doing that position. He thought there was a need for it. That person coordinates a lot of different functions, not just the people that stopped by the office, people that called and came in, he got them lined up to take the physical ability test, take their physicals and got them ready to go into the system. Getting into the system was where the difficulty came in because of the requirements of the South Carolina Fire Academy for the man hours of training it took. They had tried to run numerous classes at the same time and it ended up one class because people kept dropping out of the class. If they wanted to be a volunteer fireman that was great, but they may not know what that entailed. They came in there and found out they had to enter a dark and smoky building and realized that was not for them and they drop out of it. The dropout rate of the volunteer classes was close to 50%. When they got 25-50 people in there, they were lucky to get 12 out. It was not for everybody. A lot of people thought they would just be riding in a fire truck and that was not what it was. The state’s requirement for training had increased…it had almost doubled. The initial training used to be 80 hours and now it was 90 and that was just what they called OSHA training. They now mandated that before someone could enter
a burning building they had to be a Firefighter I which threw in another 80 hours. As of July 2009 every volunteer that went through the system had to be a Firefighter I before they could enter a burning building. The ones before July 2009 were grandfathered in. He could not see someone that had been in the department 10 years have to go back and go through training again. Training issues were not set by Horry County.

Mr. Allen said they had talked six months ago about establishing a different type of volunteer firefighter and having a truck operator. Setting aside the OSHA safety requirement, he believed the state law gave the authorization to the local fire chief to determine and to make that so called eligibility list to a fire department as to how he could do what. Mr. P. Prince said in the unincorporated areas, they may have somebody that might know how to drive a pumper truck and do everything in the world to get them there and get them the water, but he did not need to know how to go in that building. Chief Alderman said that was absolutely right. Mr. P. Prince said he had to stay in the truck. They had people that knew how to fight wood and brush fires and they never had any type of training other than their personal training growing up on the farm fighting with brushes and hoses. In the rural areas they had brush fire, car fire, house fire, barn fire and things like that and it did not take a rocket scientist to be able to do that and they needed to be able to get some type of authorization so they could get volunteers to do those kinds of things.

Chief Alderman said if they went through the first part of the ADR class for 90 hours and were not an interior firefighter they could still participate in the activities of the fire department like brush fires and car fires. They just could not go into burning buildings. They did have pumper operators…take someone that was 60 years old and had past experience and he was a driver…he had one in Little River that drove trucks for Walmart…he was a driver operator…he drove a fire truck and pumped it…that was what he did. He probably had a half dozen or more of them…they did allow that…but they still had to go through EVDT which was 40 hours and go through pumps which was 24-36 hours plus they had to take a DOT physical which was required. Mr. P. Prince said they were just talking about volunteers. Chief Alderman said that was just volunteers. Mr. Schulz asked how many dropped out in the first 90 hours. Chief Alderman said they dropped out way before that. They fell out in the second and third class. The problem was they gave them physicals. They spent $275 on physicals for them, a county policy, they only go through 8 hours of training and say thank you very much but it was not for them…that created a problem. If he put 60 people through in a year’s time and they had 20 drop out that was almost $6,000 in physical money that was gone. Mr. Schulz asked if there was a better way to screen the people. Chief Alderman said the state had just come out with a class, he thought it was called fire and emergency services, a 40 hour class that was going to run 60 volunteers at one time, screen them out because they did not need physicals for the class…so they were going to get involved in it and had 60 people waiting and that would weed out the class because they were going to explain to them in that 40 hour class exactly what was going to be demanded of them. They had to abide by certain things because they had already done the physical ability test to get in the class so they knew they had the physical ability. They were going to have to know what the demand was before they went out there. It was a brand new class and he did not know if anybody had taught a class yet. The plan was to do that in October. Mr. Schulz said that was a lot of money. Chief Alderman said a lot of money.

Mr. P. Prince said the biggest issue they had at the time was to get people to man the thirty-something stations. There were some that did not have anybody there. Some of them did not have
any volunteers or fulltime people. Chief Alderman said he was right. Mr. P. Prince said that was the biggest issue they had. They had to figure out how to get the volunteers. They either had to get them to volunteer with a good incentive package or get part-time firemen. He did not know if they had checked that or not, but there were places that did part-time. He did not know if they did it by the hour or by the call.

Mr. Whitten said he was exactly right. He saw the part-time issue as where the future was going because of OSHA, insurance and human resource liability issues. They had meetings over the last two years with Human Resources talking about that and where they saw that coming because of some of the federal laws. If they did so much work they automatically had to be treated as a paid part-time staff. They actually had that concern that they had some very active volunteers that were pushing that limit.

Chief Alderman said a volunteer, by a Federal Labor Act, could only make up to 20% of what an entry level firefighter made so if a volunteer was out there running a lot of calls, the most he could make in one year was $6,000. Once he reached that amount he had to tell him not to respond anymore because, number one he loses his volunteer status and with the volunteer status they got a tax break every year. He had volunteers out there before they set that up that were running a lot of calls, especially on the east side of the county, and once they hit that magical number, they had to tell them they could not pay them anymore. Mr. Schulz asked if there were counties in the State of South Carolina that were privatized fire and EMS. Chief Alderman said no. Mr. Schulz asked how about the rural areas of the county if they privatized it. Chief Alderman said to be honest he did not know how they could do that. There had only been a few in the US that tried it.

Mr. Whitten said one of the advantages fire had was through a government fire service. They worked a 53 hour work week. It was an exemption for fire based employees and that was basically the difference between the EMS and fire. If they were a pure EMS in another county they worked 40 hours and that was it, they went on what they called premium pay and had to start paying overtime. When they did EMS as a standalone entity, they basically ran four crews with a 24-72 schedule. They worked 24 hours and then they were off for 72. That was basically a 40 hour work week. Being a fire based organization they could work a 24-48 so he only had to have three crews as opposed to four. That was the way the Federal Law and Fair Labor Standard Act was written and that was obviously what they had to go by when they paid overtime and pay salaries. That was the huge value that no private firm could touch. Mr. Sawyer said that was the saving the general fund enjoyed or gained by the merger. Mr. Whitten said right.

Mr. Allen said getting back to the privatization question…wasn’t there some counties in the state that provided their EMS service through the hospital systems? Chief Alderman said maybe either Greenville or Spartanburg.

Lee Hitchcock said he was a Shriner and there were loads of ambulances that came in and out of Greenville Hospital. Some of them were paid but they had the same problem and in reference to Myrtle Beach having their own, if Myrtle Beach was tied up then the county jumped up. The same thing happened in Greenville. If the city was tied up, they had to go to a private ambulance service and when they started using a private ambulance service the cost started going up.
Mr. P. Prince said they talked about privatization at one time and found out that the cost level was not that great. It was very possible that once the privatization got it the county would not have as much control. If they did not have much control on how they went to a house and treated a patient and all kinds of things that they did not have hands-on that they did at the time. If they did everything right like they needed to do while it was in-house, that was the best deal they were going to get because they had to have every employee with a good personality, attitude, morals and all that good stuff and they had the best of the whole deal. It was the county’s responsibility if they did it that way.

Mr. J. Prince said the volunteer study suggested several different ways to have a better volunteer base and it actually did a very good job of understanding what he saw daily or every time he spoke to a volunteer or career person and somebody was unhappy. It said in there that there were volunteers, some of whom wanted the organization to return to the way it was and were unhappy with the fire administration. Obviously when they had an organization as big as they did, especially with volunteers, there were going to be people that would say they could do it as good as the Fire Chief, even though they may not be qualified to do it, but it did give recommendations of how to start preparing some of it which was through some committees. It actually offered that the best fix would come from committees including those who were firefighters. He asked if they had done any of that. Maybe they were trying to do some of that with the volunteer coordinator that they were looking at putting on. Chief Alderman said they had a VIP Committee (volunteer improvement committee) that was made up of all volunteers. Mr. J. Prince said according to those people that was some of the problem. Chief Alderman said the person on the committee was the acting volunteer coordinator and was the liaison. They had originally set it up with some career people but the volunteers did not like that. The older volunteers did not want that. They wanted to be all volunteers so it went to an all volunteers. Mr. J. Prince said continuing the separation. Chief Alderman said yes. Mr. J. Prince said that put a bigger wedge between them. Chief Alderman said there was an equal amount they had a 1% fund that actually were made up of more volunteers than career. It should be made up by the percentage of career and volunteers so instead of being three volunteers and two careers it should actually be three careers and two volunteers because they had more careers than volunteers. They had volunteers on the apparatus committee. If they wanted to be involved the county more than welcomed them to be involved. That was one of the things they encouraged.

Mr. Schulz asked what was the biggest problem. Chief Alderman said probably like it was everywhere else...one thought they were better than the other. When they had a career department, the volunteers took the fire truck out and the career people asked why they cleaned it up before they brought it back and they always had that head butting in there. It was a little easier in Horry County because of the fact that the career stations had volunteers and they usually did not have enough apparatus and it was always a career truck going out and the volunteers supplemented it...it was training...career went through many, many more hours of training. Volunteers were reaping the same benefits with one third of the training, things like that. It was just human nature. He wished he could get 100% people out there with the right demeanor and the happiest and politest people in the world but that was never going to happen.

Mr. J. Prince said it was hard to work volunteers and there was no doubt about it. He did not care if they were in a campaign and working volunteers or working them as volunteer firefighters, it did
not matter. Chief Alderman said they only counted county employees and never counted volunteers as county employees. He counted them as county employees because he was responsible for them just like he was for career firefighters. If they went out there and did something bad or something good, he let them know. He did the same with career. He had to treat them the same and that may have been the problem because they were never treated the same but he had to treat them the same. He patted them on the back when they did good and had them in his office when they done something bad. The problem was if he had them in his office and yelled at them they could go to Council and say that Chief Alderman was picking on them. Mr. J. prince said they did that. Chief Alderman said they did and that was a true fact. It was very difficult to manage a volunteer and try to treat everybody equal in a department like that.

Mr. Schulz asked if it would help any if he put volunteers in certain stations in the western part of the county and separate them from the career...east of the waterway. Would they work together better if they did not mix them. Mr. J. Prince said the problem was getting them, they did not have them. Chief Alderman said a good example was Iron Springs. They built a fire station way up there and spent $700,000 and nobody was around it so the fire station sat there and the ISO came in and said it was a nice fire station but they could not give them a rating because they had nobody to get the engine out. He remembered going to the Council Retreat and saying they had to do something and then it was a year or two down the line after they had some community meetings. The community was upset because they had a station there and it never got out. Council allowed for the hiring of fire fighters up there so they had two fire fighters on duty every day up there in that area and it was very sparsely populated. It was almost in North Carolina. It was not fair to those people to get basically no fire insurance when they had a ten. His feelings were that the county took the proper steps by putting people in there because they had no volunteers. They reduced their insurance rates to make them happy like they did everywhere else in the county. He applauded Council for doing that because if they would have done what they wanted that station would have never got a career person.

Mr. J. Prince said he personally needed an update because the report was old. There were several things in it that were outdated. Everything from the number of volunteers they had was not accurate from then verses the present. It said they had eleven stations with career personnel in them and he thought they had way more than that at the time. He needed somebody to go through it and get him a little more accurate numbers. Mr. Allen said they were going to ask them that before they adjourned.

Chief Alderman said one of the things he had tried to do was accomplish a lot of the recommendations without a cost to the county. That was why they had moved personnel down to a minimum staffing on apparatus and to open up the stations especially on the western side of the county. The most recent one they had done was Pitch Landing, hooking that up because they had people in that area and the truck was not getting out and he did not want to see that affect the ISO rating there. They read the recommendation in the study where it said they should have four people on an engine and the minimum was three. It was very unfortunate that they had only two people on every fire truck in the county.

Mr. J. Prince said he heard it all the time from the fire fighters that they were supposed to have four people and they could not do this, this and this and the bottom line at the moment was until they
found a better way to do it, he would rather have two than none and he thought that everybody that lived around there would rather have two than none and he said that publicly…they had to spread it. As thin as it was it was a whole lot better than not having anybody there and they would find out pretty quickly if their ISO rating became a ten. Chief Alderman said he did not just look at fires. In the Pitch Landing area they had run many EMS calls in that area that was serious. If fact even in stations that were manned, the ambulance had to come all the way from either Conway or Bucksport and the fire truck was on the scene ten minutes before the ambulance ever got there on a cardiac arrest and they would start the life saving procedures on something like that and that was how he had sort of looked at it was if 74% of the calls they were responding to were EMS calls, they should get a fire struck on the scene and at least start some type of emergency services on the patient until the ambulance could get there. In the summer time it was not uncommon for all the ambulances on the west side to be on the east side. That had happened for years. A lot of times the reason he sent extra fire apparatus was to get manpower there.

Mr. Allen said while they were on that, there had been a lot of talk, good or bad, positive or negative, about fire trucks responding to so many minor calls and he understood that there were situations that they did not know what they had out there so they had to send something and they were constantly asked why they had a fire truck going to such minor calls and to calls that probably did not warrant them. He personally experienced it within about six or eight months ago when his father-in-law had a situation and he was there on the scene and it was not that he did not want the help to come when it was warranted because he had been there, it was an awful good sound when they were out there struggling with a suspect on the side of the road and heard the sirens coming and it was the same thing with the fire service so when they heard those sirens coming they knew help was near. When there was a clear cut situation and the caller instructed the dispatcher of it, the person was alert, breathing and there was no true medical emergency there, please do not send a fire truck. Then all of a sudden an ambulance, fire truck and a battalion chief truck rolled up and it could have been very well handled by just the ambulance crew. He knew there were some issues that had to be worked through for that thought that probably they would need to revamp or look at more training and more discretion giving to the dispatchers but it sounded to him like the buck was being passed because everybody was afraid of the liability issue. It was really costing them and was creating a hazard like a few years ago on the fire call in the Loris area to where the fire engine turned over and some folks were hurt. He had passed minor fender bender accidents on highways to where they had a half million dollar ladder truck out there blocking up a section of highway. He understood they were there to try to protect that scene, he understood that, and if the scene needed that good and fine, but there probably needed to be some sort of other training discretion decision put in place to find a happy medium. They heard that they were going out and stacking calls and they heard that, and he thought it was an issue that really needed to be looked into and addressed. He did not have the answers. They were supposed to be the experts, the professionals and he really thought that was an area they needed to put more attention into and look into while they were going through it. He was not faulting it because he thought the fire department had came a long way and were doing great job. With an organization that large they were going to have some things that fell through the cracks and he thought that was an area to where Council was catching a lot of heat from the citizens especially on the western side of the county. If it was needed, that was fine, but if it was not it needed, to stay parked at the station house. Now where they made that determination and stuff he thought that was an important one. He would like for that to be scrutinized again.
Mr. P. Prince said if he remembered correctly when fire and EMS were completely separated and they called for an ambulance that was all they got. Mr. Whitten said he knew before they merged the EMS and fire they were doing, and it was a big issue when they were doing it, because they were actually using separate radio systems, separate dispatch systems. To the point that Mr. Allen wanted them to look at it, they would do that but just a little background for the system...he was very hesitant to give the dispatchers that discretion. He would rather that reside with the battalion chief. He would explain why...when they put the computerized dispatch in the service they basically sat down with all the various people, specifically law enforcement and fire/rescue because they were all basically treated the same, and they defined a list of incident types, so when someone called 911 at some point in that conversation they had typed their incident, they had said it was a general medical call, structure fire or an assault in progress, whatever that incident code was and when that incident code was developed, 911 folks sat down with fire/rescue or law enforcement and asked what they wanted responding on that type of call. If it was a domestic call, the police would say they wanted at least two units dispatched to the call. If it was cardiac, they would need an ambulance and a fire crew, so whatever their definitions were. When that call came in and the incident was typed in, the computerized dispatch based on the input from the professionals in a previous discussion, automatically set their recommendations. They really had challenges of saying a dispatcher was not going to send what the fire service had said they wanted sent on that call. The question he had to make sure that he went back and reiterated was making sure they typed the calls in correctly because if it was coming in as a small non-life threatening medical and was getting typed as a critical injury, that was going to be an issue. There was a lot of guidance from the national standards about all the different incident types so if they typed it correctly and then dispatched it to the battalion chiefs, watch commanders or sergeants had the authority to modify that list of entities responding. He did not really want his dispatchers to do that because if that battalion chief cancels units that were responding, they were going to respond to the chief about why they did. The dispatcher was going to say they sent what they had previously identified should be sent. They would go back and take a look at that and make sure the training for the dispatchers was good and solid and they would also take a look at the incident response levels. He could do that and respond back to them at the next meeting on it if that was adequate. Mr. Allen said certainly.

Mr. J. Prince said they had all agreed that the volunteer bases were getting critical certainly in some places and they had the opportunity and it looked like they were hiring a guy and putting him in the position to be a coordinator. Surely they were going to develop some sort of plan or program to attempt to get more volunteers, keep the ones they had and also attempt to get more.

Chief Alderman said they already had a plan in place. The department was just not winging it. They had a description for it. Mr. J. Prince said he did not have it. He did not have that plan so could he get that for them. Chief Alderman said he would get them the description because he was going to have to do that anyway to have the job posted. Mr. J. Prince said he was going to do the job description pretty easy but if they had not done it yet that was fine, but as they developed a plan to enhance the volunteer base that was very interesting to him and he would like to see what it was and how he was thinking. Chief Alderman said the retaining side of it had offered to pay for insurance for them and they got a supplemental retirement on the 1% side that everyone got each year. Mr. J. Prince thought that he had given them that but they had not really gotten anything that was going to
help them get more volunteers. Mr. Whitten asked if they were looking for a written volunteer recruitment and retention policy... a plan. They would develop that.

Chief Alderman said they took dozens and dozens of applications. His budget allowed X amount of dollars a year for physicals. At the time he was giving 500 physicals a year at $200. If they brought on 100 more people that brought the dollar value of his physicals up to the point where he did not know if he had the money to supply them. That was why the class was trying to weed people out so they would not waste money. Mr. J. Prince thought that was a great idea. Chief Alderman said that was going to help because he was not going to be wasting money giving physicals to people who were only going to be there 4-6 hours. Mr. J. Prince said unless something had changed, what they had been doing was not working because the volunteer base was still coming down. They were trying some new things and that was what he wanted to understand was the things he was trying. Chief Alderman said the high school program, trying to get kids in high school involved in the fire service. They stated that last year. It was set up and Chief Beans got a grant for it and it was set up to benefit the high school program to get them involved. They went to class every day for 3-4 hours a day 5 days a week. After two years they came out as a Firefighter II. They wanted that to grow.

Mr. Whitten said what they would receive was a written recruitment and retention plan with goals and objectives measurable in writing that they could have and read and be aware of the specifics. They had heard a lot of verbal and they would provide that to them in writing.

Mr. Allen said if they would bring in a timeline when they brought that person onboard and if they could have that in place before that person, with the goals, timeline and baseline at where they were starting at to where after six months they could come back to them and say what they had accomplished and done. Most grants required that. Mr. Whitten said they would have the first cut of that at the next Ad Hoc meeting. Before they went final they would see it and if they had comments or suggestions they would listen at that point.

Mr. P. Prince asked if the person was already there or were they going to have to go out and advertise and hire one. Mr. Whitten said they would go through the process of actually advertising, interviewing and hiring the right person. There was a strong probability that it would be an in-house individual. The advertisement would be in-house. Mr. P. Prince said if a year went by and they were not doing their job they did not need to keep them for five years and not be successful. Mr. Allen said certainly because he had addressed it at the Council meeting and that was the purpose of having it to where at the end of six months he wanted to see something because if it was not being productive for them he would be the first one to tell Council that they needed to put the brakes on it and obligate the funding for it. He wanted it to work, he wanted to see it.

Mr. J. Prince said they were obligating the funding to start it. Mr. Sawyer said they could change individuals but if they started the program, they paid the money back. Mr. Allen said the pressure would be on Chief Alderman to produce. Mr. Whitten thought that was relevant. When they talked about the volunteer recruiter position it was the fire chief’s and his responsibility, it was not one guy and they could say he failed or didn’t, it was all of theirs. He would tell them that he was not prepared to pass that responsibility down to an individual and say... hey he took the job. He was going to obviously feel a lot of the numbers and be aware of the program and objectives but it was their responsibility. He thought that needed to be said. Mr. Schulz said the reality was it was their
responsibility. Mr. Whitten said that was exactly right. They were the ones to set up the vote and accept the grant. They passed that and he knew who stood in front of the podium when they did not like the numbers that came back. He felt that and he got the message.

Mr. J. Prince said they should hire the person from the inside. The study alluded to a necessity. Chief Alderman said they were at the critical point that once they gave them a grant they had so many days to hire that person. They needed to get it advertised ASAP. Mr. Whitten said the stuff that the chief said had to be done that was his responsibility to get it done. Mr. P. Prince asked if they advertised out or in-house first. Chief Alderman said they advertised in-house first. It would be nice to get someone familiar with the organization, someone that maybe started as a volunteer. Mr. Schulz asked how about someone that was currently a volunteer. Would they know about it? Chief Alderman said they were allowed to apply in-house. They had an in-house posting for firefighter/EMT because there were vacancies. They were going to be hired for the volunteer rights.

Mr. Allen asked if there were any further questions pertaining to the volunteer coordinator issue. There were none.

Mr. Whitten said he really did not like the term the Fire Study used ‘in distress” but that was what they used so he brought that forward. The next section talked about the Fire/EMS merger and kind of went back into that. They also said it was not included in the scope of their study. One of the comments they made and he disagreed with, was that the merger expedited the exit of some volunteers since the higher training levels required more of their time. He did not believe that was a function of the medical. He believed, as the chief had told them, there was a lot of fire training that had been increased that was a challenge to the volunteers to be able to meet that number so there were some issues on that. It went into a lengthy discussion of the organization about how it was structured with the different departments. Mr. J. Prince said that was not accurate either. Mr. Whitten said no, it was not, but they would provide them with a revised organization of that day Part II.

Mr. Whitten said it went into a section they referred to as “other findings.” They had a number of issues that were relevant and talked about making sure they were communicating internally talking about the chief’s meetings, when they bring the senior volunteers together quarterly and talking about making them involved in committees, as the chief had talked about, apparatus committees and other things. That was very valid. Over time the issues that were discussed in the finding, they had done a lot on some of that modification but the budget was also impacted over time. Mr. Allen said he had a question on that. Could they get a report from FY09 and FY10 of the overtime expenditures for the Fire Department and to which position? Mr. Whitten said yes for FY09 and FY10. Mr. Allen said right, the past year. Mr. Sawyer said that would be FY11 that just finished. Mr. Allen told Mr. Sawyer he was right. Mr. Whitten said they could do that.

Mr. Whitten said some discussions on turnover were included in that section and they talked about position descriptions and standards. A lot of it was just talking about the 80 hour OSHA class at the time and talked about the standards for the officers and recommended that the standards for an officer position and fire lieutenant be the same standard for career and volunteer to meet those standards because their responsibilities on the fire grounds needed to assure that the skill levels were appropriate and they made that recommendation. Mr. Allen said speaking of that, could they
also get a copy of the policy as far as fire ground command…who had what when they arrived at
stations such as the lieutenants, captain and battalion chief. Chief Alderman said he would get them
that information.

Mr. J. Prince said while they were doing the chart, he had found several marine dive rescue,
hazardous tech, wildfire investigating officer…anything that was voluntary…in other words, if they
were doing a marine dive rescue team…was that voluntary? Mr. P. Prince said they did not need to
be doing that was what he was saying. Mr. J. Prince said no, that was not what he was saying, he
wanted to know if it was a voluntary thing, in other words, did they have people in those positions
where that was all they did…Chief Alderman said that was part of the volunteer duties. They
requested to be on those teams. Mr. Whitten said nobody was forced on the dive team. They asked
for it…they volunteered to be on that team in addition to the regular duties. Mr. J. Prince asked
which ones were serving other places as well…the dive team was certainly one of them…how about
wildfire…didn’t they have a wildfire team? Chief Alderman said yes. Mr. J. Prince asked what was
the cost for apparatus and training.

Mr. Allen said if they could provide them with a breakdown of what it cost the Fire/Rescue to
maintain the dive team, their equipment and to pay them…the wildfire team with their personnel
and if they were fulltime or volunteer assigned to it and what and if they could do the same thing
with the fire investigation team…those three specialty areas…if they could show them what it cost
them, the personnel assigned and equipment.

Chief Alderman said that fire investigation was career. They had two fulltime and one part-time.
The part-time was a volunteer but was busy enough to make it a part-time job. As far as the other
ones went, they used to pay overtime…when the study was done they paid overtime for training but
since then the overtime went away. They stopped that and tried to make them train on their own
shift as much as they could. He thought it was more important that they kept apparatus staffed if
they had to pay overtime for that than it was to pay overtime for the special teams. Mr. J. Prince
said he asked his question wrong, he should have been asking…people that were fulltime…just like
the marine dive rescue…was that a fulltime position and did he have someone there doing it all the
time? Chief Alderman said none of them were. Mr. P. Prince asked if that was a voluntary thing.
Mr. J. Prince said it was a voluntary thing but they did other things. Mr. P. Prince said they got paid.
Chief Alderman said if they went on a call they got paid. If they had to come in off duty to dive for
a person or something like that…yes they did because he did not have people on duty all the time to
do it. Mr. P. Prince asked if they got any funds from the state for those types of things. Mr. Allen
said for specialty teams and such. Mr. P. Prince asked if the state was responsible for some of those
things. Mr. Allen said they could probably discuss it better after they brought forth what it cost, who
was assigned, the equipment and etc.

Mr. Whitten said the next section talked about inter-jurisdictional comparisons. They identified four
other entities of some similar size and area and discussed how they handled the service. There were
as many different ways to provide fire service in the southeast as they could come up with. There
were a variety of ways. They had four different entities and had talked about everything from the
day stations to one-man…they had talked about two people on a piece of apparatus but some were
staffed with one. Some were pure volunteer. There was such a variety but if they had any specific
questions they could talk about them but they had a very lengthy discussion on the other entities.
Mr. Allen said as far as the inter-jurisdictional, for the next meeting if he could, he would like to see a map and districts and as far as calling cards involving the area and volunteer rescue squads and how they fit in to the services provided for the county…in the mix. Mr. P. Prince asked what kind of maps. Mr. Allen said coverage areas. Mr. Whitten said they could do that.

Mr. Whitten said Section Three was the risk and demand analysis…part of the scope of work in the study talked about the volunteer fund…the 1% fund…they were asked if that was being spent correctly. Mr. Allen said and handled appropriately and he thought they said it was. Mr. Whitten said that was exactly what they said. That was a good response on that one.

The Risk and Demand Analysis section talked about a number of issues. They talked about capturing data specifically NIFRS which was fire information. They had not been capturing as well then as they were at the time. Chief Alderman said they had trained and offered training to all the volunteers through the NIFRS reporting. An example was if a volunteer station went out on a call by themselves…say to a car fire, they were required to do the NIFRS report when they came back, it was now up to the battalion chiefs to follow up on it and make sure it was done. If it was not done then they had to obtain the information to get it done because the insurance companies were going to want a report on any fire that insurance was involved with. They were trying to improve the volunteer side of it to produce a little better. He thought that back then it was only about 35% reporting. They had greatly improved that. The volunteer side was probably up to 65%. On the career side they did the reporting and he could hold them accountable but it was difficult to hold the volunteers accountable for things like that but they had offered them training many, many times.

Mr. Whitten said the Risk Assessment section basically outlined the specific hazards that fire services faced which were fire, hazardous materials, technical rescue, medical and the other hazards were hurricane, tornado, severe weather and tsunami. They basically quoted that Horry County had an all-hazards mitigation plan which Council had adopted and approved by resolution. It basically went through that process and discussed that. They had an analysis on the fire risk talking about a per capita basis. They gave them some numeric talking about the risk being relatively high in Horry County. They talked about special areas that had special hazards such as the hospital areas and places that had high industrial chemicals. Horry County was not a heavy chemical facility. He thought there were some places in South Carolina that had a lot more hazardous materials than Horry County. They had challenges and had some hazardous material incidents but not on the scale of some of the other entities and jurisdictions in South Carolina.

They talked about population growth. They had just gotten the 2010 census and it said they went from 196,000 to almost 270,000 in ten years. They were obviously seeing that growth and they did some analysis about where they were seeing the growth. They broke it down and gave them some additional information talking about expected growth. It was not really fire specific but was geographical data. The GIS department could provide that type of information also. It talked about their demand for fire service and medical calls and there was a nice chart on page 62 that basically said with the number of calls for services going up every year would continue to go up and that was a reality that they were aware of. They showed them some statistics under the past demand and went back about three or four years and showed them where they were getting the incident types of
calls and the volume. The trend was very clear that the number of calls for services were going up and as more people were moving into Horry County there were more calls for service.

They went into a per capita and did some analysis on the number of incidents per thousand people and did some projected demands on that. They said it was going to continue to go up. The one that was relevant was the bottom one where they made some recommendations that they could do better if they had increased data collection and analysis. He agreed with that and would say that was a true statement in all public safety, it was not just fire. They were at the point of putting tools in place that gave them that capability. It was hard to go before County Council in the budgetary environment they were in and say he would like to hire a half dozen people for the fire department to sit and study maps, that was a tough one. They wanted uniforms out there responding to calls. As they moved through it, the IT/GIS Department was doing some great things in helping them do some of the data analysis and he thought they were going to see some of that improvement as they moved through the process. The data was there and they were getting to the point they could look at it in a special environment through maps and call demands and they would be doing it on data analysis. They made a case that they needed to continue doing that and do more of it to be smarter. He thought Council had said that they needed to operate smarter and not just throw money at it. They needed to make sure they were getting the biggest bang for their buck. That section basically said they should continue to do that.

The next meeting they would be prepared to discuss sections four, five and six or as they directed them to. That was a run down on the first three sections. They had a list of what they had asked for and they would confirm that list with them. He had made a note of what they had asked for that they would present at the next meeting.

Mr. Allen asked if there were any final comments or request from the committee members.

Mr. J. Prince asked Mr. Whitten if he was going to bring him that information the day before. Mr. Whitten said the day of. Mr. J. Prince said he did not like that. Mr. Whitten said they would like to get it to them a week before. Mr. J. Prince said that would be great.

Mr. P. Prince said he went to a call the other night and there were eight tankers with apparatus there for just an old barn and it was raining that night. There were also two ambulances. A few years ago Loris would have taken one truck and six or seven people and a tanker load of water and went and took care of it. Mr. Whitten said he would ask that if they saw an incident that they thought the response did not make sense to them, he would ask that they let him know so he could run that down. It was a learning experience for them. Somebody might have made a mistake or a system mistake. If they would shoot that to him on the date, time, and location, he would run it down and see if there was a mistake, if they had done something and could learn from that. Mr. P. Prince said maybe one of the battalion chiefs or whatever was there and it looked like they would observe the whole thing and come back and say they needed to get a better handle on it.

Mr. Whitten said the problem with the battalion chief was he was not going to be aware of the 911 component and he would like to know because sometimes...he had looked at other Council members who had asked him to look into an incident and when they go back to the 911 tape, what was called in made that response perfectly valid based on the information the dispatcher knew.
When they got to the ground maybe it wasn’t …he had lighting hit his house and set his house on fire and thought World War III had started and they were going to say they had a small window burning, the window frame was on fire. It scared the daylights out of him and so he thought if they let him know he could go back to the whole system, he would have somebody do it to be honest, and look at the whole system and see if they dropped it or see if the response was correct or if there was a mistake. He would like to look at the whole system and not just what they saw on the ground.

Mr. J. Prince said he had often thought how they could separate Hwy 501 where he was sitting at a traffic light and somebody came by him and ran the light and bam there was a smack and he picked up the phone and called 911 and told them there was a traffic accident at so and so...now that could be a bump and they pulled on the side of the road looking at the cars or could be three people dead in it. It looked to him it would be difficult to decide when to send and when not to send.

Mr. Whitten said a previous Council member called him one day and asked why they sent two ambulances and three fire trucks to a fender bender on Hwy 501 and he called them back and said there were two fatalities. It might look like a fender bender but if they were not wearing seatbelts it could be much more severe or could look bad and everybody was buckled up and the air bags were on and they were all standing outside the car looking at it.

Mr. J. Prince said he actually had a call on the fire department and a complaint on 911. They sent everything out there so he called Mr. Whitten and asked what went on and after listening to the tape the lady on the telephone was hysterical and they never could get it out of her, she said the house was going to catch on fire, well the bedroom was …but might not necessarily be the house was going to catch fire but after listening to that tape it was obvious they had to send everything they had so how do they distinguish between the two.

Mr. Allen said it went back to what they discussed a few minutes ago to where Mr. Whitten and the Chief were going to have to take a look at it and talk with their onsite field commanders and be able to hopefully get on the same sheet of music with decisions and would report back to them. It was good to have Mr. Frazier, their senior Council member, to come in.

Mr. Frazier said he was one of the first volunteers when they started the fire department. As a matter of fact, there were only two stations in the County…Bucksport and over in the Socastee area. One of the things on how they got volunteers was the firemen took a part in what was happening in the community. That was one of the things that kind of disturbed him when they had the community fair at the center a few months ago and the firemen from the Bucksport station came out there and needed to be out there so they would know the people and could talk to the people and get volunteers like that. They could come out there and make themselves known and could get volunteers. After just a few minutes someone else came and ate their lunch and it was pitiful. He was concerned because he watched it. They had to hurry up and get back to the station. They couldn’t stay there any time at all and didn’t even get the chance to say good evening or good bye. He didn’t like that at all. It was a tough job. Volunteers would work if they let them work. A lot of volunteers dropped out because they could not get along with the paid firemen. The paid firemen were like they were getting paid for it and they didn’t know what they were doing so they just moved on out of the way. They needed them. One of the things that was told to them when they first began the fire department in Horry County, him, W.G. Hucks, Ulysses Dewitt, Laurie McLeod,
the administrator, they went all over the country almost to find out what people were doing and the thing they told them was to be careful, be very careful when they started hiring employees for fire because if they didn’t they were going to have problems. If they got the community involved and the volunteers involved …they would have a problem with the fire department. When they shut the community out and the volunteers out they would have a problem. They met with the federal boys out in Denver and they said the very same identical thing, be very careful. He was for the volunteers, bring them in and let them go to work. It worked while he was there.

Mr. Allen said basically they had something called community policing and Mr. Frazier would like to see the fire department look towards something in that field, community fire fighting, to try to keep the people that lived in the area assigned to the areas that were feasible because they knew the people and the area. That could be something the chief might want to take a look at for his command staff as far as assigning work stations. He knew the workload shifted and changed but that might be something to look at.

Mr. Allen said that Mr. Schulz was present and was going to be coming on the AdHoc Committee over the next short while. He was glad to have his help and input.

Mr. Allen asked about the next meeting schedule and asked if there was any way they could schedule it towards the end of September. Mr. Whitten said if at all possible not the 29th or 30th. Mr. Allen asked if they had any input from the committee as far as the date of the 29th or 30th. Mr. Whitten said they could do it those days but that was the Fall Biker Rally. Mr. Allen asked about the 26th or 27th. Mr. Weaver suggested September 27th at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Allen said the 27th at 9:00 a.m. it was unless there was any objection.

Mr. Allen said in closing he would like to ask staff while they were there and Mr. Weaver, and the press was there also, any questions pertaining to the meetings he asked that they please direct them towards the Public Information Officer, Lisa Bourcier, outside of the Council members if that was appropriate, Mr. Weaver. Mr. Weaver said yes. Mr. Allen said it was to try to keep some things in order. He encouraged the committee members between then and the next meeting on the 27th to do some individual leg work and get out and look at the fire stations and talk to the fire staff. Their purpose there was not to tell the chief how to run the fire department. Their job was a fact finding mission with suggestions so they could come back to the full Council and it could be handed down through Mr. Weaver to his staff. He said staff and Council all had the very same goal which was to provide the best possible fire service and to get the most bang for their buck for the citizens of Horry County. If they worked together he thought it would be a good thing because some of the open discussion they had that day they hadn’t had with their senior staff on those issues and how could they know what they expected from them unless they talked to them. It was a good thing. He was excited about it and was looking forward to it. They were a growing County. With current census they had grown by about 38% or so and it had put a lot of demands and stress on the Fire/Rescue. They were the largest geographical county east of the Mississippi and in fact, unless he made a mistake, he thought they were probably one, if not the largest County Fire/Rescue organization, as far as the structure and the services…they were number two.

Mr. P. Prince said in land area, yes. Mr. Allen said it was a monumental task and they spent a lot of money on the Fire Efficiency Study even though it was three years old. It was up to them to work
with staff to go through it and try to see what they could and hopefully in some areas improve the fire service because that was the whole key. They wanted to move forward, they didn’t want to move backwards. There was going to be a lot of issues that the public was expecting them as a Council to address with staff. He said they needed to stay focused and do a good job. They were not going to make everybody happy all the time. Their goal was to try to provide the best service possible.

Mr. Allen said between then and the next meeting, any person that had any items he encouraged them to get it to Mr. Whitten because after the meeting that day he was probably going to have a laundry list so he might not have the opportunity to get back with them and as soon as they liked but as soon as he got them on paper and finalized they would provide it to Ms. Bourcier, so the press could have access to it. He asked if there was anyone there with the public that would like to have public input time.

Chief Knight, Garden City Fire Department, said he wanted to thank Council for having the study done, as pointed out it had been three years ago, but he had been able to take the information and look …his department started out as an all volunteer and it transitioned with call volume and growth and those kinds of things into a combination department and he was having struggles himself in trying to get volunteers. They needed them. They had a sign out front that stayed out front that said volunteers walk-in, no experience necessary and that kind of thing. There had been a couple things that was exactly spot on. One was the fact that the attitude in the country towards volunteers, not just fire but any other, had dropped down. A lot of it had to do with the economy. People had to spend their time making a living and if that job didn’t pay enough they had to go find a second job. The pool was not as big as it used to be. It used to be as big as the Atlantic Ocean and now it was probably more like a lake or a pond. With that being said, the thing he was having trouble with on his volunteer side was like the Chief was exactly right. They start a class with twenty people and half of them drop out. Those that stayed they were only staying to get the training to put on an application or resume and go somewhere else. He got them sometimes that went through the Horry County volunteer program. They would come and want to volunteer and had Firefighter I and those kinds of things. He had the same thing happen to him. He paid for their physicals. Any physical activity in training they had to give them and provide it and when they did that they took the class and got their certificate and the next thing he knew they were going to work with the City of Georgetown. He had two and some of the best volunteers he had lately were now fulltime with the City of Georgetown but still volunteered with him. The idea that they needed more volunteers would be great if they could pull out of the building right now and all stand out on the street corner and the next twenty people that went by they said they wanted them and them to volunteer they could have their volunteer numbers but they couldn’t do that so what they had to do was to make sure they provided a program that not only made it attractive for them to come but attractive for them to stay. He was speaking for his own department and wasn’t speaking about Horry County, he was speaking about the things he had to do, he was excited about what was going to come out of there to get some volunteers. The bottom line for him was they covered the unincorporated part of Horry County and it had been his understanding since he had been in Murrells Inlet for ten years that because they were a special purpose tax district, they in some respects, were like a municipality to the extent that they controlled what they did within the board as far as fire service went but didn’t have the other things…all their money went to fire service. He was excited about being there and what was going on and was excited about the job they were doing to try to help the county. He
looked forward to being able to help the county even more in providing Fire/EMS services not only to the citizens of Murrells Inlet/Garden City fire district, but Horry County which was 60% of their district, those who lived in Georgetown County which was 40% of their district, and those that lived outside either. He thanked them and asked that they press on and that it was going to be well worth the effort. Mr. J. Prince thanked Chief Knight for being there.

Mr. Allen said they appreciated Chief Knight’s efforts and longtime service to the citizens of the county. He knew the Murrells Inlet/Garden City Fire Department had a long history and a good one. They appreciated his service.

Mr. P. Prince said they needed to get something…Chief Alderman said it had been on it for years. Mr. P. Prince said for them to figure out some additional things to put on there to encourage them.

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.