

CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
POLICE AND FIRE PENSION FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
FINAL PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCE 2015-304

DATE: June 18, 2015
TIME: 9:00 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.
PLACE: Jacksonville Police and Fire Pension Fund
One West Adams Street, Suite 100
Richard "Dick" Cohee Board Room
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Walt Bussells, Board Chair
Nathaniel Glover, Jr., Board Secretary
Dr. Adam Herbert, Trustee
Asst. Chief Larry Schmitt, Police Trustee
Lt. Richard Tuten, III, Fire Trustee

ALSO PRESENT:

John Keane,
Executive Director-Administrator
Debbie Manning, Executive Assistant
Paul Daragjati, Board Counsel

This cause came on to be heard at the time and place aforesaid, when and where the following proceedings were reported by:

Cheryl Franzino, RPR, FPR
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Jacksonville, Florida 32202

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1 June 18, 2015 9:00 a.m.

2 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: We'll call the
3 meeting to order.

4 MR. KEANE: Everyone please rise and
5 join me as we pledge allegiance to the flag of
6 the United States of America, and to the
7 Republic for which it stands, one nation, under
8 God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for
9 all.

10 Thank you very much.

11 Please be seated.

12 Mr. Chairman and Trustees, we can
13 indulge who we'd like to -- we'll deviate from
14 the agenda for just a moment and take up the
15 consent agenda with some time connections that
16 Debbie has to process for the meeting tomorrow.

17 MR. TUTEN: I'll make a motion we
18 accept.

19 CHIEF SCHMITT: Second.

20 MR. BUSSELLS: Questions or comments?
21 All in favor, say "aye."

22 (Responses of "ayes.")

23 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Opposed, like sign,
24 carries unanimously.

25 MR. KEANE: Mr. Trustees and Chairman,

1 we're on the regular agenda. This is a public
2 hearing for three minutes of discussion from the
3 public on Ordinance 2015-304.

4 We have a list of speakers, and each
5 trustee has a copy of the ordinance as amended.
6 The purpose is to give the testimony and hear
7 the discussion from the people. And we're ready
8 to start.

9 MR. BUSSELLS: Steve Amos.

10 MR. AMOS: Good afternoon. Thank you
11 for the opportunity to speak with you this
12 afternoon. My name is Steve Amos, and I am the
13 president of the Fraternal Order of Police 5-30
14 in Jacksonville.

15 I represent the men and women of the
16 Jacksonville Sheriff's Office that are members
17 of the Police and Fire Pension Fund.

18 And with regards to the current Pension
19 Reform Bill, I first wish to acknowledge the
20 hard work that's gone into this product by
21 Council Member Gulliford and the fund's
22 executive director, John Keane.

23 I also wish to thank the elected
24 trustees for their diligence and dedication to
25 the members of this fund.

1 To the trustees, I'm here today not
2 only as a member of the fund but as a
3 representative for the many concerned police
4 officers enrolled in this fund.

5 The fund and its members have made
6 substantial contributions and concessions over
7 the past decades for the sustainability of this
8 current plan.

9 We are all familiar with the old adage,
10 "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice,
11 shame on me."

12 We are now here for the third time
13 where legislation could be handed down to us to
14 make further concessions to the members,
15 commonly referred to as "shared sacrifice" in
16 the media.

17 After the first concessions, the city
18 never paid above the ARC, the unfunded liability
19 minimum payments, nor did they after the second
20 round of concessions were made.

21 And now they're asking members to pay
22 even more to go towards reducing the unfunded
23 liability cost as a result of poor fiscal
24 practices.

25 As a result, here we are many years

1 later, giving tens of millions of dollars to
2 essentially pay down the city's past obligations
3 to the fund. The effects of this legislation
4 will be to further perpetuate the problem with
5 officers leaving and going to other agencies,
6 seeking better and more sustainable employment
7 with better pension plans.

8 Since 1996, when the two-tiered pay
9 system was implemented, the starting salary for
10 a working police officer was lowered nearly
11 \$6,000. It takes six years for that officer to
12 reach the same pay level as the police officer
13 who was hired prior to 1996.

14 Today, we are currently 198, for the
15 starting salary, out of 367 agencies in Florida.
16 We have the highest qualifications of any of
17 those agencies, including the requirement of a
18 bachelor's degree.

19 There have been no across-the-board
20 increases since the 2006 contract. And
21 additionally, in 2012, we took a voluntary 3
22 percent pay cut to save further layoffs from
23 happening.

24 We do not believe that this will stop
25 the bleeding. On the contrary, it could very

1 well open the flood gates if we're not cautious.
2 But with normal attrition and the loss of many
3 officers to other agencies, the unfunded actual
4 liability is only going to grow.

5 In closing, we, the members of the
6 fund, ask the trustees to reject this proposal
7 and continue to work towards ensuring that we
8 receive the benefits that we were promised.

9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Randy Wyse.

11 MR. WYSE: Thank you.

12 Gentlemen, as you know, a long drawn-
13 out situation we've been going through for seven
14 years. It's just only a few at this table that
15 have actually been going through it that long.
16 So I think brothers and sisters that have fought
17 through this for that long have a different
18 perspective of it.

19 As we've always said -- and I've never
20 wavered -- that we would support any agreement
21 reached between the Police and Fire Pension Fund
22 and the City of Jacksonville, and we will stand
23 by that.

24 I feel like, again, that the shared
25 sacrifice has gone a little too far. I hope you

1 take that into perspective as you make these
2 decisions and that there is a conversation about
3 it, that the pendulum swung a little too far.
4 But we know that you will ultimately make a
5 decision that's based on what's best for the
6 members.

7 As you know, the statute says that, and
8 we know that you take that very seriously. And,
9 again, speaking to each one of you individually
10 that I have, you understand some of the issues
11 that we have with it.

12 But, again, we wish it to -- to really
13 do what's right for the members. And we know
14 that it's important that we have a future
15 that -- you know, that those benefits are
16 sustainable and that we keep those going. And
17 we understand that's how that decision-making
18 process goes to your head after speaking to each
19 of you.

20 So, again, always remember the men and
21 women that are risking their lives out there
22 depend on this and that there's been some
23 promises made, and there's been sacrifices made,
24 and I know I've expressed those sacrifices to
25 each one of you.

1 And please keep that in your mind as
2 you make that decision. And, again, we'll
3 support you after the fact. Thank you.

4 MR. BUSSELLS: Nelson Fernandez.

5 MR. FERNANDEZ: Good afternoon. I
6 would like to start off by thanking all the
7 board members and Director Keane for allowing me
8 this opportunity to voice my concerns about the
9 proposed Pension Reform Bill that's before you
10 which was submitted by Councilman Gulliford and
11 for seriously taking into consideration what
12 every plan participant, that's not in the DROP
13 yet or hasn't reached 20 years, will sacrifice
14 if it's approved by you.

15 And speaking of sacrifice, there has
16 been a lot of rhetoric at city hall about us
17 needing to share in the sacrifice. That's an
18 unfortunate mischaracterization of the real
19 situation that's been going on here.

20 As police officers and firefighters,
21 we're all too familiar with what it means to
22 sacrifice. To sacrifice is inherent in our
23 professions. We accept that fact.

24 We'd be in some other career field,
25 probably making substantially more money if we

1 hadn't agreed to undertake these sacrifices.

2 For the citizens, we've sacrificed time
3 away from our families in order to care for and
4 protect their families when we put on that
5 uniform and badge.

6 We've paid for our sacrifices with our
7 health and sometimes with our lives for the
8 benefit of the people that expect and rely on us
9 to respond to their emergencies, many times
10 without regard for our own safety.

11 Sacrificing for total strangers, that's
12 what we do. And for the city, we've sacrificed
13 pay raises for the last nine years in order to
14 do our part to help out the city during the
15 downturn in the economy.

16 We sacrificed our health benefits,
17 through astronomically higher premiums and
18 drastically reduced coverage, in order to do our
19 part to help the city cut costs.

20 We've continually been asked to cut
21 operating budgets and staffing to increase
22 services with fewer resources and to endure
23 other operational hardships that I can assure
24 you are not of our making.

25 We have made concessions for the city

1 time and time again. Now, they're expecting us
2 to sacrifice our pension benefits to share in
3 the sacrifices and to do our part.

4 Gentlemen, we have shared in the
5 sacrifices, and we have done our part. It seems
6 that we're the only ones that ever have to hold
7 up our end of the bargain.

8 Now, ask yourself this. When was the
9 last time the city sacrificed anything for us?
10 I think you all know the answer to that.

11 In closing, I implore you to vote "no"
12 on the proposal before you, especially if you're
13 a beneficiary of the very agreement that you
14 might be considering to change. Of all people,
15 you should know how important the security of
16 preserving what has been promised to us is for
17 our retirements.

18 I ask that you amend this agreement to
19 exclude existing employees from benefit
20 reductions. Any cost savings attained by
21 diminishing benefits for existing employees
22 needs to be achieved some other way. And there
23 are other ways that have yet to be explored.

24 Please do not forget that there are
25 people here that have earned what we have been

1 promised to us. If the city won't do their
2 part, we ask that you do yours for our sake.
3 Thank you.

4 MR. BUSSELLS: R. T Weeks.

5 MR. WEEKS: Good afternoon. There's a
6 lot of things I really wanted to talk about, and
7 three minutes is going to give me nowhere close.
8 I'm going to address this a little bit
9 differently today.

10 I'm not going to really talk a lot
11 about the details and what's on the table
12 because I feel that there's this big ball in
13 motion, kind of like the first "Raiders of the
14 Lost Arc" movie.

15 It's going to keep rolling, and there's
16 nothing right now we can do to stop it; but we
17 need to take a look at what's going on in the
18 community, in the city right now with our police
19 officers and our firefighters.

20 Morale, all time low. Ask a normal
21 city what they think about a police officer,
22 their job, what they get, money, retirement --
23 there's not a lot of trust right now. There's
24 not a lot of good faith, but we still continue
25 to do our job.

1 This deal is going to rip apart both
2 agencies more than anything we've ever seen in
3 the history of our agency. Officers are going
4 to continue to retire at a degrading retirement.
5 Our new hires are going to be in a constant with
6 current employees over scraps of a retirement.

7 Seven years will be here in two weeks.
8 We'll be at the table with a huge unfunded
9 liability like we are right now. I don't feel
10 this deal addresses that. And I feel that by
11 pushing this deal through, we're driving the
12 stake in any kind of boost of morale, any type
13 of unity that could come and benefit both of our
14 agencies.

15 If this is going to go through, if this
16 deal is -- you all are a lot more smarter than I
17 am. The information at this table is far better
18 than I could ever offer at an individual level.
19 I'm asking -- I'm asking you to revisit what's
20 being offered new hires.

21 And if the very best that can be
22 offered to current employees with the reduction
23 in the DROP, with the reduction in interest
24 rates for our COLA, I'm asking you to at least
25 look at pushing the term out longer than seven

1 years.

2 Give the city more time to pay back
3 what they owe, lock them in to help hopefully
4 funding that unfunded liability; and we've got
5 to do something about our new hires. I'm asking
6 for those two things.

7 Vote "no" on this deal. If you want to
8 keep the concessions at -- the general structure
9 is 20 years you get this; the COLA is set at
10 Social Security; the DROP is a fluctuating
11 interest rate.

12 Okay; I'm good with that. You need to
13 push this term out, and you need to revisit what
14 they're offering new hires. Thank you.

15 MR. BUSSELLS: Cecil Hoskins.

16 MR. HOSKINS: Well, good afternoon.
17 Thank you for your hard work. But I want to
18 tell you, this contract won't impact me at all.
19 I'm set to leave in six months.

20 It's actually good for me. It secured
21 the few things I wanted. But the problem is,
22 it's bad for everybody else in the world in this
23 city.

24 Okay. When I say that, first of all,
25 on page 2, it says that we're to accept this in

1 good faith. We've accepted too much garbage in
2 good faith with these politicians. They cannot
3 be trusted.

4 Second of all, on page 7, Article D
5 doesn't list any designated funding resources.
6 Even Gulliford said recently on the news that
7 they'd have to raise property taxes or a half-
8 cent sales tax to fund this thing properly.

9 So basically we're buying a house with
10 no money coming in. While they do designate
11 four different accounts for money to go into,
12 they don't tell you where that money's coming
13 from. That's a real issue to me.

14 How many of you would go out and buy a
15 home right now with no money coming in? We
16 can't trust them there.

17 Third, if an individual retired before
18 25 years, he cannot draw a pension until he's
19 62. What if my wife was diagnosed with cancer
20 when I'm 59, and I retired and want to stay home
21 and take care of her for three years?

22 I can't draw a dime to take care of
23 her. Do you think that's fair? Do you? It's a
24 fair question to ask.

25 It appears, on page 14, the city's

1 contribution is reduced to 7 percent while the
2 employee's contribution is increased to 10
3 percent on page 12. Why are we reducing theirs?
4 They haven't been paying in the past.

5 Any increase in benefits could increase
6 employee contributions, page 16, Article D.

7 Page 21 turns negotiations over to the
8 unions. The problem I have with that, that
9 means every time we open up a contract to
10 negotiate, pension benefits can change. That
11 means at least ten times, in a thirty-year
12 career, your pension benefits could change.

13 Now, the man who leaves or the lady who
14 leaves at 25 years is jeopardized multiple
15 times. They can't do a DROP. They can't draw
16 until they're 62, and they get a reduction in
17 how much they draw. Where is that fair?

18 Do any of the politicians accept that
19 type of deal for themselves? No.

20 Now, this morning, whenever I walked in
21 this station, I did a poll. There were five
22 minorities there. All five minorities will have
23 lesser benefits than their white male
24 counterparts.

25 Have any studies been done to see how

1 this will impact the minorities on the job,
2 whether Arican-American, whether female, whether
3 Asian, or anything else?

4 This opens a Pandora's Box for a law-
5 suit for the city and for the pension fund if it
6 discriminates unfairly against them.

7 And, final, is right where we started.
8 Why should we trust these politicians?

9 They're the ones that they were only
10 partially responsible for a \$500 million
11 mis-accounting in pension and in budgeting for
12 the city. They're untrustworthy. I don't trust
13 them now. Thank you.

14 MR. BUSSELLS: James -- is it Burnet?

15 MR. BURNET: Yes.

16 Good afternoon, Board Members. Thank
17 you for the opportunity to speak. My name is
18 James Burnet. In addition to being a retired
19 JSO member, I'm a local attorney.

20 I wholeheartedly endorse the comments
21 that have already been made to you. I think you
22 are all well aware of the issues that are
23 inherent here.

24 What I came for today is to let you
25 know that I've been approached by a group of

1 both firefighters and police officers who are
2 extremely disgruntled about this agreement, and
3 more specifically, about the COLA provisions in
4 that agreement.

5 The reason they're disgruntled is this
6 was a quid pro quo agreement that resulted in,
7 as you've already heard today, a two-tier pay
8 scale that went into effect at both agencies in
9 late 1996 that has resulted in every employee
10 that's been hired since then receiving less pay
11 during their first six years of work until their
12 six-year anniversary when they're equalized with
13 other similarly situated employees.

14 That was given up in return for a
15 guaranteed 3 percent COLA which is now proposed
16 to be taken away. It's unfair to the employees
17 that are currently on the job that have suffered
18 from that lower pay for the last nineteen years.

19 These people are upset about it.
20 They've approached me with regard to legal
21 action in that regard. We're still exploring
22 those options. I'm not coming here today to say
23 that that's going to be the case, but I want you
24 to understand that these people are frustrated,
25 okay.

1 They don't see a lot of support coming
2 from the board, although certainly we all
3 recognize the hard work that you've put into
4 this. But please understand that you've got
5 these employees out here who feel like they've
6 been -- well, their needs have not been well
7 guarded by the city, and to a lesser extent,
8 this board.

9 The main issue I'm dealing with here
10 today again is the COLA. Take that into
11 consideration when you consider this agreement.
12 If there's a way to amend just that portion,
13 that might be acceptable, although I don't think
14 the agreement's favorable to any current
15 employees. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Michael Taylor.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Good afternoon. Thank you
18 for letting me speak.

19 Michael Taylor. I've been on the force
20 17 years. I hear all this about shared
21 sacrifice. I've shared. I've given enough.

22 2001, while protecting this city, I was
23 shot twice in the line of duty. I almost lost
24 my life. I gave up a lot.

25 In the end, I ended up losing my family

1 over this whole thing. So when people sit in a
2 meeting and say shared sacrifice, ask how many
3 people have been shot on their job and has lost
4 their family. I venture to say very few.

5 My point being with all this is -- in
6 2001, again, I was shot. I got hired in 1998.
7 I was promised certain things in 1998. I went
8 out and did my job, tried to protect the
9 citizens of Jacksonville, and in the process
10 again, getting shot.

11 Sheriff Glover came to my house. He
12 should remember that. He sat down with me. He
13 spoke with me. I got through it.

14 Unfortunately, again, I did lose my
15 family over this, but I did make it.

16 My point again with this is that you
17 guys promised me certain things as far as the
18 city, promised me certain things in 1998 when I
19 got hired on, I did everything I was supposed to
20 and lost almost everything that I had.

21 And now that I'm at the time of my
22 retirement, for them to turn around and say,
23 "You know what, just because you don't have
24 three more years, you don't get what everybody
25 else got. Even though you sacrificed more than

1 anybody else in this department, you don't get
2 what they get. We're going to give you what the
3 same guy got who's got a year on," which I don't
4 think's fair, okay.

5 If the new guys come on after us, if
6 they sign up for a new agreement, then so be it.
7 Let those people choose that.

8 I promise you this, if you took this
9 same predicament and went to the public, to a
10 public job, went to EverBank or went to
11 BellSouth, and you try to do the same contract
12 change that you're doing here, you'd have mass
13 exodus. Everybody in that building would walk
14 out and say I'm not doing it.

15 I put 17 years in here, and all of a
16 sudden you want to change it. Nobody would
17 agree to that. Unfortunately, for police and
18 firemen, we can't go on strike, okay; so,
19 therefore, we do our job. We continue to work
20 hard and do what we should by protecting the
21 citizens of Jacksonville.

22 And we say, you know what, city leaders
23 and you guys will do the right thing and make
24 the right decisions and keep us guys out here
25 happy and working.

1 I've got plenty of guys that work for
2 me right now that have less than six years on.
3 They went to the job fair, the FOP. Guess what
4 they're wanting to do? They're wanting to
5 leave.

6 And, truthfully, it's hard for me to
7 keep telling them to stay here when you get a
8 better benefit somewhere else. You get 70
9 percent retirement at 20 years, not 60 percent.
10 You don't have them after your pension or after
11 your retirement.

12 You know, it's a kind of like your
13 child. If your child does good, you reward
14 them. You don't punish them and take their
15 phone from them because guess what happens if
16 you do, they rebel against you. And that's what
17 the policemen are going to be doing here;
18 they're going to be leaving. They're going to
19 be gone.

20 The piggyback on James Burnet's
21 comments about 3 percent COLA, again, a
22 policeman -- when I started, I barely made
23 \$30,000 a year, okay. For me to give up my
24 four- and six-year step raise, that's pretty
25 huge. But the only reason we gave it up is

1 because we were promised that we would get our
2 3 percent COLA at the end of retirement.

3 All right. Again, I'm just speaking
4 upon myself, 17 years on. If you change it now,
5 what can I do? I have no other retirement.
6 I've got to go work another job, plain and
7 simple. I appreciate it.

8 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Thomas Thomas.

9 MR. THOMAS: I'm Thomas Thomas, and
10 I've followed all these meetings all of last
11 year. I'm not going to speak about all of the
12 problems in personnel. I'm looking at it as a
13 taxpayer as to where the next \$40 million is
14 going to come from.

15 And I'm not sure that even in the past
16 year that the city contributed \$40 million. All
17 I'm saying to this, back in 2008, when Ernie
18 Isaac was chairman of the board with JEA, that
19 was the time that they went to Tallahassee to
20 get a 3 percent added to your electric bill.

21 They got approval from the legislature
22 to do so, but it was also on the condition that
23 if anytime in the future they wanted to increase
24 the 3 percent to 6 percent, they did not have to
25 go back to Tallahassee. They could unilaterally

1 increase it to 6 percent.

2 And I'm saying that this is available
3 to be done. I've talked with Ernie Isaac, who I
4 know personally, and I'm just going to leave it
5 at that, but your next problem's going to be the
6 \$40 million. And I don't think the city put a
7 dime in in the last year and three months which
8 would be \$50 million. Thank you.

9 MR. BUSSELLS: Paul -- is it To-kar-ek?

10 OFFICER TOKAREK: Yes, sir.

11 Good afternoon. I'm Officer Tokarek.
12 I'm in almost 20 years, one month away. So, of
13 course, I'm concerned like everyone else.

14 I'm going to go from a different angle.
15 We can go on numbers and all that stuff, but you
16 guys are a lot smarter than me as far as that
17 goes, so I'm not even going to go there.

18 When I was hired, a family member, my
19 grandmother once told me, when I'm a police
20 officer, be as honest as the day is long.

21 Every supervisor, every sheriff I've
22 had is do the right thing by your people. Treat
23 family members and treat other people, the
24 citizens of Jacksonville, like you would
25 yourself.

1 Well, I've done my part. The police
2 officers have done their part. The firefighters
3 have done their part. So now I'm up here, along
4 with everybody else, to ask you guys to do your
5 part, and that's basically look out for us like
6 family because pretty much, at the end of the
7 day, that's what we are.

8 I wish there were more people out to
9 voice their opinion here, but unfortunately,
10 they pretty much, who I've talked to, the deal
11 was done. Over 20 years, I've seen they're
12 going to do what they want to do. You guys
13 might make your decision, think about your
14 vacation, some said, so it's a done deal.

15 I know there's a lot of concerns about
16 maybe it might go to court. We might lose if
17 that goes to that. A few of you were concerned
18 about the COLA, DROP, and all that stuff. Well,
19 we lose in the COLA.

20 However, we all know that in three
21 years, they might come back and do this all over
22 again. We don't know what's going to happen
23 with the city, like I said, underfunded, don't
24 even have a funding source.

25 How are they going to come up the

1 money? If they can't do it with the other
2 contract, how are they going to come up with the
3 money now? So it's a big concern for all of us.

4 Another thing is -- my big thing is I
5 just don't believe that current employees should
6 be touched. It's really just that simple. If
7 you're vested, you should be -- this should be
8 with new employees.

9 I'm just saying, unfortunately, I don't
10 want them to get the raw end of the deal either
11 with this new agreement because, of course, I'm
12 going to jump on the back of the other person
13 who said, "Who's going to want to come here?"

14 I know I wouldn't if you promise me
15 this, and I come here, and all of a sudden it's
16 gone. So my big thing is, to you, the Board,
17 you took an oath to do -- you're our voice.
18 It's to do the right thing.

19 To do the right thing, especially for
20 current employees, is to reject, send it back to
21 them. At least stand your ground on something.
22 Hey, stand the ground on the 3 percent COLA, or
23 stand with this one, or stand on the 8.4, or
24 something like that, but stand on something
25 instead of giving into everything, it seems

1 like, because we know we're going to be back in
2 a few years. I know it, before I retire.

3 So I'm just asking you, what I've been
4 told over and over again, and that's, you know,
5 do the right thing on two accounts. Make sure
6 they have a funding source before you guys sign
7 it and leave current employees vested.

8 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Brian Mock.

9 MR. MOCK: Brian Mock. I've been a
10 police officer for about 14 years. The last few
11 years I feel like we've had to listen to a lot
12 of half truths from the local politicians and
13 local media.

14 It's a lie that we have an egregious
15 pension that's bankrupting the city. The truth
16 is the problems the city's having is the fact
17 that they haven't funded city services properly
18 for years, and the underfunding of our pension
19 is just one example of how that's come home to
20 roost.

21 The new plan for new hires that has
22 been negotiated, even though people say, you
23 know, it's competitive with the -- well, some
24 people from the mayor's office say it's
25 competitive with what's out there. It's not.

1 If you look at what a police officer in
2 Tampa makes, their maximum salary, \$78,000 plus;
3 and in 20 years they get a \$49,000 plus pension.

4 In St. Petersburg, \$68,000 plus; and in
5 25 years they get \$51,000 in pension, both with
6 the COLA. And in Orlando \$72,000, 20 years with
7 a \$50,000 pension with a COLA.

8 In Jacksonville, our max salary is
9 \$62,400, and our pension is \$37,400. We are not
10 anywhere near competitive right now with any
11 other agency, but you want to cut it for new
12 hires.

13 I don't think it's fair. I think that
14 you have to stand up for what we've paid for
15 with our reduced salaries and the money that's
16 been paid in out of our salaries into the
17 pension, plus out of our Chapter 185 and 175
18 moneys, and defend it. That's it. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: That is all the
20 speaker forms I have. Does anyone else want to
21 speak?

22 You want to speak?

23 OFFICER PREVOST: I'm Officer John
24 Prevost, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

25 Today is my 19th-year anniversary.

1 I've been here 19 years today. We have a lot of
2 officers talking about how we took the pay cut.
3 I am one of the first that took the pay cut. I
4 took a \$6,000 pay cut two weeks after they hired
5 me. I sacrificed for 19 damn years.

6 I work hard. I do my job like other
7 officers in this department, and now we're at
8 the end of our careers. Officer Tokarek spoke
9 up. He's got three months left. So we're three
10 months short of 20 years. I'm 365 days short of
11 20 years.

12 And now at the end of my career, when I
13 was promised all these things for 19 years,
14 you're going to say no. I just think it's
15 unfair. And I think you need to consider all
16 these officers that are doing their job and
17 everything that we've given up.

18 Like some of these officers have said,
19 it's not fair that we've been waiting all these
20 years for something that was promised us 20
21 years ago, or 19 years ago, and now the rug's
22 being pulled out from underneath us again. And
23 it's just a sad agency that we're dealing with
24 all this stuff, and it's going on and on and on.
25 And it's not a good place to work.

1 And I don't blame any of these guys
2 that just pack their bags and go to another
3 agency because if I wasn't 50 years old, I
4 would. But I'm hoping in 365 days to not worry
5 about your DROP because I want to leave like
6 many other officers will.

7 So I feel sorry for this city and this
8 agency. But you guys need to do the right thing
9 like they keep saying. It's only fair. We've
10 done our time. We've worked hard for it, and
11 now it's not there. I just don't think it's
12 fair. Thank you very much.

13 MR. BUSSELLS: Say your name, if you
14 would, just for the record.

15 MR. COYLE: William Coyle.

16 Good afternoon. My name is William
17 Coyle, and I've been working for the
18 Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department for a
19 little over seven years.

20 I'm not here to talk to you about
21 what's fair or what's right or what's been
22 promised because let's face it, none of that
23 really matters.

24 What really matters is where we're at
25 right now and the decisions we make to carry

1 forward. As much as I'd like to think of myself
2 and my colleagues as heroes, I realize that we
3 are public servants and, therefore, subject to
4 political theatrics.

5 So instead of using my heart and moral
6 compass to make this decision, I chose to rely
7 on logic. To me, logically, it makes sense that
8 since a judge has already struck down our
9 current agreement and declared that we must
10 collectively bargain every three years, it also
11 stands to reason he would also strike down this
12 new seven-year agreement.

13 As I'm sure you're well aware, our new
14 reduced benefit package would be the new
15 starting point for future negotiations. So
16 should this proposed agreement pass, we would be
17 weakening our position by voluntarily lowering
18 our own bar of expectations.

19 I've heard the argument, "What if we
20 get a worked deal, then what?" My response to
21 that is, "What if we don't get a worked deal?"

22 What if we appeal the decision and
23 allow the courts to settle this matter? What
24 about the recent Illinois Supreme Court pension
25 reform ruling? What about the city of Chicago?

1 I'm not inclined to make another deal
2 with the city that they potentially can't
3 afford.

4 Now, Jacksonville is the eleventh
5 largest city by population and largest by square
6 miles. We are a military town with a strong
7 economic base that only continues to grow as
8 people continue to migrate here.

9 The court system will ensure that we
10 are both bargaining in good faith by opening the
11 books and ensuring that we reach a reasonable
12 solution. If it turns out that the city can
13 afford to uphold our current agreement, then I
14 think they should because our job is dangerous,
15 and it is stressful, both emotionally and
16 physically, and they did make a promise.

17 However, promises, a signed contract or
18 not, I do not want the city to go bankrupt
19 because I plan on retiring here. So if they
20 can't afford it, then the courts will make sure
21 a reasonable solution's reached.

22 In closing, I recognize the tremendous
23 burden on all your shoulders, and I do not envy
24 you. I don't suspect you're taking this
25 decision lightly, and I also don't suspect any

1 of you will derive satisfaction from reducing
2 our benefits.

3 Guys and gals, I'm not a greedy
4 fireman. To be honest, if I honestly believed
5 the city wasn't financially stressed, I wouldn't
6 be standing here before you.

7 Sadly, like all governments do, any
8 money saved from a reduction in our benefits
9 will be used to enforce more unnecessary
10 regulations or simply be paid to the friends and
11 family members of the city council members for
12 city-wide construction projects.

13 So, yes, I do want what's best for the
14 city, but I'm not convinced voluntarily reducing
15 our benefits is the answer.

16 Thank you for your time and
17 consideration.

18 MR. BUSSELLS: We'll now close the
19 public speaking period.

20 MR. KEANE: Mr. Chairman and Trustees,
21 we have no other further business to bring
22 before the Board of Trustees at this meeting.

23 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: John, you just want
24 to maybe touch on -- I know that the chief and
25 lieutenant have been out speaking about the

1 specifics of what's going on and what the facts
2 are, and so forth.

3 Is there anything there that might be
4 useful to touch on today? I know it's been well
5 received because of the candor and completeness
6 and thoroughness of those sessions, and I
7 appreciate you all making time to go do that,
8 that hard work.

9 But is there anything that we might
10 learn from that, or is worthy of any further
11 consideration?

12 MR. TUTEN: Well, John and I this
13 morning went to the union hall, and we had a
14 question and answer with the people.

15 Did you see the questions and answers?

16 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Yes.

17 MR. TUTEN: We printed that out. I
18 sent them to John. John and Bob worked on
19 them -- maybe even Paul there -- and sent them
20 out. And since then, I mean, it went from up
21 here to literally down here, from my side, as
22 far as people, you know, kind of wondering what
23 this meant, what that meant.

24 I'm not necessarily assuming they're
25 any happier, of course, but that seems to be --

1 I mean, I don't know the reason why it's calmed
2 down -- I've gotten a few emails here and
3 there -- but it is precipitous as far as the
4 drop-off goes once we send out that -- a copy of
5 the bill and a copy of the questions; because,
6 truthfully, most people's questions are centered
7 around COLA, the DROP.

8 You know, is it still 20 years? Is it
9 25? That kind of thing -- the numbers
10 basically. You know, we've all focused on all
11 the other stuff too that comes into play. But
12 for the most part, my members seem to be focused
13 on the numbers, and rightly so; but that's just
14 kind of where we are.

15 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: We put that on the
16 website, I think, John?

17 MR. KEANE: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Chief.

19 CHIEF SCHMITT: One of the -- I guess
20 the biggest aspect of this for the officers, and
21 a lot of questions that I've fielded, has to do
22 with how we got here. You know, thirteen years
23 in a row the city lowered the millage rate.

24 Thirteen years in a row our funding
25 percentage went down. No matter what deal would

1 get proposed, they can't be happy with it. It's
2 less than what we were promised. So that's a
3 big mental and emotional hurdle to overcome.
4 It's not right; but unfortunately, it's where we
5 are.

6 Hopefully, the city will do what's
7 right, unlike the past two agreements. But
8 that's the biggest challenge that I've faced,
9 and there's no good answer for that.

10 How do you tell them we know where we
11 are because of the underfunding, mainly from the
12 city, but this time they're going to do
13 different.

14 The flip side of that is if we don't do
15 anything, we're going to keep heading in the
16 same direction which is even worse than where we
17 are.

18 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Well said.

19 Anything else for the workshop today?

20 MR. GLOVER: No.

21 CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: So we'll meet at
22 9:00 a.m. in the morning for the regular monthly
23 board meeting and then take up acts on this and
24 the other business to move forward.

25 MR. KEANE: Yes, sir.

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CHAIRMAN BUSSELLS: Meeting's
adjourned.

(Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Cheryl L. Franzino, a Registered
Professional Reporter and Notary Public, in and
for the County of Duval, do hereby certify that
I was authorized to and did report the foregoing
proceedings, and that the transcript, pages 1
through 36, is a true and correct record of the
proceedings to the best of my ability.

Done and dated this 26th day of June 2015,
at Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida.

Cheryl L. Franzino
Cheryl L. Franzino, RPR, FPR
Court Reporter

