

**Pasco County Mosquito Control District**

**2308 Marathon Road, Odessa FL 33556**

**Minutes of Regular Board Meeting**

**February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Call to Order**

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Abbott led the Pledge of Alliance to the Flag.

**Roll Call**

Chairman Abbott called the roll. Chairman Abbott, Secretary Cox, and Treasurer Evans were present.

District Staff: Executive Director Rogers, Edwin Martinez, Jose Freundt, Maria Johnson, Lindsay O'Reilly, Nick Mc Faul, Karen Mojica, and Agne Prasuskas.

Additional attendees: Lina Castro (Invision Advisors, Inc.), Laura Donaldson (District Counsel), Shannon Blankenship (Citizen), Cathy Julian (Citizen), Tim and Kate Holmes (Citizens).

**Approval of Agenda**

Executive Director Rogers stated that item 7B should be removed from the agenda, as the documents are still under review and not ready for Board consideration. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the revised agenda, and the motion was unanimously approved.

**Consent Agenda**

Commissioner Cox inquired about a line item on the financial reconciliation summary, asking whether the transaction was correctly assigned to the appropriate bank code. Finance Director Freundt clarified that the account code reflects the account from which the funds originated, not the destination account. Commissioner Cox then motioned to approve the consent agenda, which was unanimously approved.

**Public Comment**

Commissioner Abbott called for public comment.

Cathy Julian noted that our team was in her neighborhood last week, despite her not noticing any mosquitoes. However, she did observe a significant number near Starkey Market. She also inquired about a \$4,500 charge to Sunrise Consulting on the financials, questioning why it was categorized under "Legal & Engineering" rather than as a consulting expense. Additionally, she asked if any bids had been received from the ITB on the surplus property, to which Chairman Abbott responded that the matter would be addressed later in the agenda.

Chairman Abbott introduced two guest speakers, Tim and Kate Holmes, to share their personal experiences with mosquito-borne diseases. Kate Holmes, a globally recognized scientist and researcher dedicated to conservation efforts, has contracted mosquito-borne illnesses, including malaria and dengue fever, during her work around the world. Her firsthand experiences have given her extensive knowledge of disease transmission and treatment, which she shares to raise public awareness—especially as dengue fever is present in Florida, including Pasco County, and poses a significant public health risk. She noted that while a dengue vaccine exists and is approved for use in other countries, low public awareness has led to limited demand, raising concerns about its continued availability. Holmes also discussed various treatment options for mosquito-borne diseases and their potential side effects. Tim added that he had also contracted malaria and found that the necessary medication was not as readily available in the U.S. as it is in countries with higher infection rates. Both speakers emphasized gaps in the medical community, noting that healthcare professionals are not always well-versed in mosquito-borne diseases and may not immediately consider them when diagnosing patients with relevant symptoms. They concluded by stressing the importance of effective communication in public health messaging. The way information is presented and how people perceive it plays a crucial role in raising awareness and encouraging action. Understanding the psychology and sociology of the audience ensures that the message is both received and understood.

## **New Business**

### **A. Employee Raise Policy Discussion**

Executive Director Rogers explained that the District's current employee handbook mandates annual merit-based evaluations, and any associated salary increases to take effect at the start of the fiscal year. However, this period is also the busiest time of the year, coinciding with fiscal year closeout, budget finalization, and peak operational demands during the hottest and wettest months of the year. Over time, it has become evident that this is not the ideal time to conduct evaluations and poses a burden on supervisors.

A proposed policy change would shift the evaluation cycle back six months, with an effective date of April 1st. This adjustment would allow supervisors and administration to complete evaluations and determine merit-based salary increases, when permissible, during the District's historically slowest operational months, January and February. Evaluations would then be presented for approval in March, ensuring the new cycle aligns with an April 1st implementation.

The goal is to implement this revised timeline starting with the 2025-2026 fiscal year. However, this shift would create an 18-month gap between full annual evaluation cycles. While shorter six-month reviews have already been introduced, and new hires follow a different review schedule, this change would extend the period between potential salary increases for existing staff. Establishing this policy now would provide ample notice to employees. Additionally, the transition would result in a cost savings of approximately \$70,000 in the FY 2025-2026 budget—\$65,000 in labor expenses and \$4,800 in employment taxes—by delaying performance-based raises by six months.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **A. Monthly Financials Sign-Off Process Discussion**

A sample of the proposed sign-off form was presented to the Board for review. While the form itself was deemed acceptable, Commissioner Cox expressed that the supporting documentation did not meet his expectations. He requested access to a full review of all monthly transactions.

Finance Director Freundt explained that, on average, there are 400 transactions each month, each undergoing a minimum of three levels of review with the administrative policies already in place. Providing detailed records for every transaction would be inefficient. However, he suggested that if the Commissioners wished to randomly inquire about specific transactions, similar to an audit process, the District could easily accommodate such requests. The Board agreed that this approach would be acceptable. A transaction report will be created by Administrative Manager O'Reilly to be used during the review of February's financials.

Commissioner Cox questioned why the District had presented an Audit Engagement Letter for review without including it on the agenda. Director Rogers explained that the District is beginning its annual audit for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Commissioner Cox reiterated his previous request for the District to solicit a new auditor, citing his dissatisfaction with the current auditing firm. He questioned why this had not been addressed despite his earlier concerns. Director Rogers explained that the District had competing priorities over the past year and that the RFQ process for selecting a new auditor is a lengthy one. She then deferred to Laura Donaldson, District Counsel, for further clarification. Laura Donaldson agreed with Director Rogers, explaining that a change to statute 218.391 in 2019 created a more detailed and time-consuming process for selecting an auditor. She recommended that, given the timing, it would be too late to initiate a new solicitation for this year but suggested preparing for a new solicitation for the 2026-2027 fiscal year if that is the request of the Board.

### **B. Property & Liability Insurance Update**

Finance Director Freundt informed the Board that the District's insurance coverages have been sent to two consulting firms, both of which have agreed to review the policies at no cost to ensure the District has the appropriate coverage for all areas of the organization. Results should be available by the next Board meeting.

### **C. Marathon Road Discussion**

Director Rogers deferred to Laura Donaldson, who has been researching options regarding Marathon Road. Laura explained that after speaking with an employee at Pasco County Public Works, she learned that the County currently does not have a process in place for taking over private roads. She then spoke in reference to exploring options to determine the appropriate path forward regarding easements and increased traffic patterns with a new property owner along the road. She is going to further research the historical transaction that took place when the District acquired the road and how to proceed with maintaining the road moving forward.

## D. Surplus Property Discussion

The District held a public opening for all bids submitted in response to the ITB for the surplus property. Two bids were received: one for \$800,000 and another for \$2.5 million. The Board has three options for proceeding with the received bids, which include:

- The District can accept the highest bid and proceed with executing the sales contract as outlined in the ITB.
- The District has the right to reject all bids, allowing the Board to amend the bid document and reissue it for competitive bidding. Potential modifications could include setting a minimum bid price or allowing for contingencies.
- The District can reject all bids and engage a realtor to market and list the property to identify a suitable buyer. Previously, Berkshire Hathaway and Dewey Mitchell's group assisted in finding and purchasing the property, so the Board could consider meeting with his team to discuss their interest in facilitating the sale and the associated process.

The Board unanimously voted to reject all offers and proceed with Option 3, opting to list the property on the market. They directed Director Rogers to arrange a meeting with Berkshire Hathaway for further discussion. District Counsel noted that no statute requires the solicitation of bids for real estate transactions, however any contracts would need to be reviewed and voted on by the Board.

## General Information

### A) Director's Report and District Operations, A. Rogers

A draft document has been prepared to solicit services for rebuilding the Odessa campus, and it is currently under review at the attorney's office, so progress is being made.

The inaugural meeting of the Pasco One Health Alliance was held recently and was a success.

Last month, several staff members attended the DODD short courses in Gainesville, with three of them also participating as instructors in three different courses. The District continues to support the DODD short courses as the premier mosquito control training course, not only in the U.S. but internationally, as more attendees from different countries join this comprehensive, week-long program each year.

Two employees completed the Florida Association of Special Districts' Certified District Administrative Professional training and certification course.

Regarding the Notification System, discussions about a citizen communication system, primarily to notify residents about upcoming mosquito control treatments near their homes, are ongoing. The District is finalizing details and plans to implement this system in the next couple of months, ahead of the rainy season. This initiative will improve transparency and communication with residents about mosquito control applications.

New hires include Michael Semidey as Mosquito Tech I and Joe Bratcher as Mosquito Tech I.

The District is currently interviewing candidates to fill Assistant Larvicide positions, which became vacant when the Drone Pilot and Entomologist's Assistant positions were filled. This will also create openings for additional Mosquito Tech positions.

In 2024, the District collected and disposed of 29.74 tons of used tires.

Over the next month, the District is focusing on annual calibration and maintenance for all ground and aerial application equipment, bringing new equipment into service, and refurbishing the field chicken coops. Notable new equipment includes the electric ULV sprayers and the second auto-loading system for remote aerial operations.

Finally, the upcoming FMCA’s lobbying event with the Florida Legislature, Tallahassee Days, will take place in March (17-18). Board members are asked to check their calendars and confirm attendance within the next week so that meeting arrangements can be made.

B) Community Outreach and Education Report, M. Johnson

Events over the last month events included, the Pasco One Health Alliance, Wellness Day at Veterans Park, DODD courses, Tire Amnesty, which collected 1.94 tons of tires, multiple two-day school programs, Pigs in Zephyrhills, and booths at both the Pasco County Fair and the Florida State Fair. Upcoming events include Starkey Outdoor Adventures and the Bloodmobile.

C) Safety Report, N. McFaul

No safety incidents reported. Annual ATV training is ongoing. Aerial calibration was scheduled but has been postponed to the following week due to high winds. The District has invited Hillsborough County to attend to share knowledge. The annual calibration and safety training day is set for March 24th, with a spill prevention course scheduled for April.

D) Arbovirus Report, A. Prasuskas

<https://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html>

Arbovirus	Florida - 2025	Pasco County - 2025
West Nile Virus	1 horse, 8 chickens	1 chicken
Eastern Equine Encephalitis	1 horse, 2 emu, 1 chicken	n/a
St Louis Encephalitis	n/a	n/a
Dengue	26 travel-associated dengue cases, 3 local	n/a
Chikungunya	n/a	n/a
Oropouche	n/a	n/a
Malaria	1 travel-associated	n/a

Pasco County is still under a mosquito borne illness alert.

**Good of the Order**

Commissioner Cox requested Director Rogers send details for Tallahassee Days to the Board.

**Upcoming Meetings and Events**

Chairman Abbott reported on dates of upcoming meetings as part of the Agenda with the following:

A. Regular Board Meetings (9 AM unless otherwise noted)

- March 11, 2025
- April 15, 2025
- May 13, 2025

B. Events

- Holiday- President's Day- February 17, 2025
- Pasco County Fair- February 17- 23, 2025
- State Fair – February 6-17, 2025
- AMCA Annual Meeting- March 3-7, 2025
- FMCA Legislative Days- March 17-18, 2025

**Meeting Adjournment**

Chairman Abbott motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:35 A.M.; all approved.

Meeting Adjourned.

Date: 3-11-2025

Attested: 