

Emergency Services Committee
Minutes
March 1, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Boyd at 7:00 PM.

Present: Blakeslee, Miller, Goss, Kuncaitis, Boyd, MacLean, Emerson, Stewart, Galligan, P/ZA Meyers, and Pat Parker, Metro Fire Chief.

Goss asked that the February 22, 2010 minutes reflect the comments made regarding if downsizing the previously proposed fire station. The discussion will be added to the minutes.

Pat Parker introduced himself. He has been the fire chief of Metro fire for the past 5 years, prior to which he served as a volunteer to the department since 1983. Prior to 1980, a county wide fire department was in place. The Sheriff served as the Fire Chief as well. In 1980, the County Department split into four organizations: Metro Fire (Garfield, East Bay and Acme), Peninsula Township Fire, Traverse City Fire and Rural Fire (the remaining Townships and Villages).

In 2005, a fire truck accident involving Metro Fire led to the reformation of the Department as an Act 57 Fire Authority as the original formation was not done properly. The reformation took effect January 1, 2009. The Authority is governed by a six member board, two from each of the three participating townships.

In townships with approved millages supporting the authority, a vote of 20% of the landowners can overturn it.

The 2005 incident also lead to the realization that the firefighters needed more training. It is now required that all members receive yearly physicals, a fitness/wellness coordinator has been hired and all full time employees are required to work with the coordinator. They undertake a juvenile fire setter program which is designed to work with kids that have started fires so that they will not do so in the future.

A public education program, funded by Grand Traverse County, is shared by all the fire departments in the County. It is a great program with a full time staff member assigned to it.

Metro currently addresses 3500 call per year and has an ISO rating of 6. They also provide BLS non-transport.

He distributed a copy of their Department Model which is attached to the minutes.

Currently the Department is working with a facilitator to create a Strategic Plan. The stakeholders have just been divided into 6 groups and when complete, they hope to share it with the neighboring departments. Reorganization is not only the latest buzz word, but it is happening. The Department is now forming special op "teams" so that the neighboring departments can accentuate for example Traverse City's Haz Mat Team, form a ice rescue team, etc.

Currently the Department has 15 full time employees, 5 fire prevention staff members, 3 inspectors, 1 plans examiner (who is contracted to the County for reviews) and 70+ paid on call members.

Due to a FEMA grant, a new fire station is planned to be built on Silver Lake Road in Garfield Township. While they received the grant in September 2009, no money has been received. The Department has spent over \$300k toward the project and is currently in the process of performing the Environmental Assessment. They have also just applied for a SAFER Grant for additional staffing and a grant for a new tanker truck. The Assistant Chief wrote the grants for the SAFER and Tanker. The Fire Marshall wrote the FEMA grant.

He supplied copies of the Department's 2009 report (the report can be found on-line at gtfire.org) and added that he is very proud of his statistics.

Galligan asked if Metro would consider allowing Whitewater Township to join and if so, would they combine Acme and Whitewater into one station.

Parker stated, yes, but that they would expect the same effort from our members that they currently expect from their members and that they would consider combining the two townships into one station.

Boyd asked if Metro would be able to analyze our equipment and determine what we will need to make up for the shortfalls as we would lose equipment after a separation from Rural.

Parker stated that it could be done in fairly short order. He further asked if we would be considering bringing the ambulance too.

Boyd stated that it was undecided at this time.

Kuncaitis asked if Metro was considering adding an ambulance division.

Parker said that it was part of their ten year plan. He has spoken with North Flight about putting a unit in Acme that could be staffed with a Metro driver. At this time there is not enough runs to make it work financially as the Ambulance business is hard to run without a subsidy.

Currently Metro works within a 3.4 million dollar budget.

Kuncaitis asked if there is an increase of the 2 mills proposed.

Parker answered that at last week's budget meeting the plan is to stay within the 2 mills. Our economic times cannot support an increase.

Boyd asked about a hypothetical situation on M-72. Who is dispatched at the casino entrance?

Parker stated that Metro would be dispatched as they have a measured response time and we do not.

Stewart asked if there is an established buy in cost to join Metro and about Metro's involvement with HazMat .

Parker said that at this time, there is not. It is something that would have to be talked about. Metro is currently assisting Traverse City Fire with HazMat duties as they are struggling trying to provide the service regionally with dwindling budgets. Metro has 18 trained personnel and some equipment should Traverse City fail.

Parker added that on top of the special op's that they are involved in that Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid agreements are essential in these cost cutting times. The department has also just hired a volunteer medical coordinator.

The existing stations that Metro currently has (4) were brought to the table upon the formation of Metro. They are currently leased to the Authority for \$1 per year, each. Metro pays all upkeep on them. Monies are disbursed from the Township to Metro 4 times per year. He sees that in the future the Authority needs smaller satellite stations not mega stations.

As to maintenance of the equipment, Parker said that while they are at a place where a full time mechanic could be put in place from a financial standpoint, the additional cost associated with "tooling up" the position are not in the budget.

Boyd asked that if an evaluation showed that the equipment of the township was satisfactory, what would happen if the building wasn't. Also, what would be the timeframe necessary to complete an evaluation?

Parker stated that the assessment would take approximately 3 months and that if the building or equipment was deficient, alternatives would need to be looked at.

Kuncaitis asked if Whitewater was included in the regionalization of Special Op's.

Parker responded that Bill Sedlacek stays in touch and that the teams are meeting.

Parker was asked to further elaborate on exactly what is Automatic Aid and to provide an example.

He stated that Mutual Aid means that you come when you are called and that Automatic Aid means you are automatically called. Two examples would be that Metro and The City have an automatic aid agreement and portions of Blair Twp have an automatic aid agreement.

Next he was asked how Whitewater and Metro could enter into an Automatic Aid Agreement for at least the Casino area. Kuncaitis added that we need to get past this roadblock and facilitate an Automatic Aid Agreement.

Parker isn't sure how to address this, but now that he knows that there is an issue, he will get right on it. Before, when the original coverage maps were drawn, Metro was to respond because Whitewater (Rural) didn't have the response times to properly serve the area and further, according to the information he has know, he is still of the opinion that we don't have the response times needed.

Emerson countered that he knows that we meet the response requirements.

MacLean feels that it is criminal that Metro doesn't know about the improvements that Station 3 has made similarly to Elk Rapids being in the dark.

Kuncaitis stated that on behalf of this committee, all players need to get together and figure this out.

Boyd added that this is negligence on all sided including ours.

Parker responded that he doesn't have the time to meet with all 7 stations - he deals with Bill Sedlacek.

Asked to further discuss how Metro has improved since he became chief, Parker said that they started thinking and acting as one department, not four. Today they act alike, look alike and train together. This is something that Rural isn't doing. Each station is acting independently beating to different drummers.

Kuncaitis asked about the fact that Metro utilizes a different frequency than Rural, Blair and Peninsula and to speak on the strengths and weaknesses.

Parker stated that with over 3500 calls per year, too much is going on to stay on the same frequency. As to their strengths – Great staff is what makes them stand apart; Weaknesses – as they have grown larger, losing things; for example, the communication that is lost between Rural and Metro.

Blakeslee asked if there is a minimum number of calls that we need to have in order to be considered in order to join Metro.

Parker said that more important is what are our goals? Shorter response times? Manning the station? Of the 3500 calls received, 2000+ were in Garfield. Acme and East Bay understand that when an event happens in their respective Township, the qualified staff is available to them.

Miller stated that the most important asset is manpower. How does Metro attract their staff and what is the average age?

Parker said that with high call volume comes excitement. Luck and \$12/hour help too. The average age of membership is about 30. The new generation is in it for themselves and the money.

Goss asked if Metro had good communications with Elk Rapids.

Parker stated that yes and that they train together regularly. This is an area he sees that could use improvement with Rural.

Stewart said that he was intrigued by the Automatic Aid Agreement idea especially as they continue to expand their assets.

Parker will get back to us regarding this matter as this is a good time to look into the matter. The Computer Aided Dispatch is being updated.

Information about the Public Education Officer was requested.

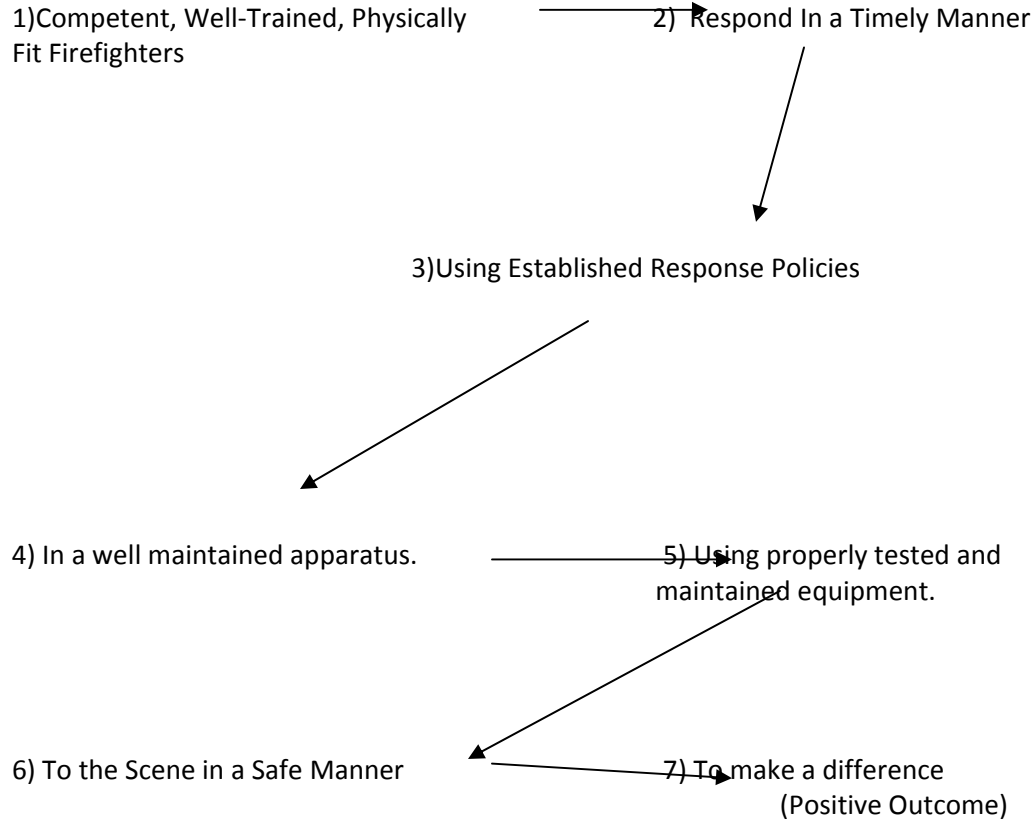
Parker said that the Public Education officer is overseen by consortium that meets quarterly to direct the efforts.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2010 at 6:00 PM and the following meeting for March 23, 2010 at 7:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted – Leslie Meyers Planning/Zoning Administrator

Metro Fire Department Model



- 1- NFPA 1582 , NFPA 1500, NFPA 471, NFPA 472, NFPA 1001, NFPA 1021, NFPA 1410, 1403
- 2- NFPA 1720, NFPA 1710
- 3- OSHA, NFPA 1500
- 4- NFPA 1901
- 5- NFPA 1962, NFPA 1932
- 6- Metro SOG's
- 7- Safer Community, Safer Firefighters, Improved ISO Rating.