

Emergency Services Committee
Minutes 2/22/2010

Meeting called to order by Chairman Boyd at 7:00 PM.

Present: Blakeslee, Miller, Goss, Kuncaitis, Boyd, MacLean, Emerson, Stewart, Galligan, Recording Secretary Meyers and 3 members of the public.

Draft minutes of February 2, 2010 were accepted.

Boyd introduced the Committee's new member, Chuck Stewart, representing the Grand Traverse Band.

Bill Sedlacek, Rural Fire Chief was introduced to the Committee. He provided a brief history of Rural Fire which was created in 1980. Rural Fire currently services 9 Townships with 5 stations (Whitewater, Fife Lake, Green lake, Long Lake and Paradise) and provides fire and rescue services. There were 10 Township's but Blair has since left. Included with the Grand Traverse County Townships, Springfield Township in Kalkaska County. Membership contributions to the Rural Fire Fund are based on 1/3 Population, 1/3 number of runs and 1/3 SEV.

Boyd asked about specialized equipment. Sedlacek stated that the Rural Fire Board (made up of the supervisors of each Township) reviews the request and if justified, they will buy it or begin saving for it. The difference between want and need must be established. Most purchases are made in 5's as there are 5 stations.

Kuncaitis asked about the Ladder Truck. Sedlacek stated that it is currently being stored in Kingsley as there is room for it. The Band did issue a grant to Rural for \$60,000 to get the truck into service.

Boyd asked about the need for the ladder truck as the Casino is sprinkled? Sedlacek added that it is used mostly for rescue but it is needed if fire gets away from the capabilities of suppression. He further added that all of Battalion 3's Firefighters are trained to use the ladder truck with the exception of one.

Kuncaitis asked that if facilities were available for the ladder truck's storage, would it be parked here.

Sedlacek stated, yes as this is where the need for the truck is. He further added that the average ladder truck has a live expectancy of 20 years and that the truck is currently 21 years old. Due to its limited use, there is still live in the truck. TC and Metro Fire have stick trucks and TC also has a ladder truck for back up. Stick Trucks can go as high as 60 – 80 feet while ladder trucks can go as high as 100+ feet.

Miller asked about what is dispatched to the casino or any call in the event of fire.

Sedlacek responded that he sends out the "guns" as it is easier to turn equipment around then need it later.

Kuncaitis asked about what is the future plans for Rural Fire are.

Sedlacek stated that the next step is to improve the ISO rating with an upcoming re-evaluation. If successful, we could reduce the current 9-10 rating to 7-8. He also added that a request had come at last week's Rural Fire Board meeting for a 15% decrease in the budget.

Blakeslee asked who had asked for the 15% decrease.

Green Lake Township requested the decrease.

Goss asked if the previously proposed fire hall could be made smaller. Discussion revealed that yes it could. Sedlacek added that in all instances that he was aware of, when made smaller the need for an addition was warranted within a few years.

Boyd asked about emergency water sources at Island Lake.

Sedlacek said that he would like to see a 30,000 gallon storage tank at Island Lake. The cost would be approximately \$45,000 and could not be paid for by Rural Fire. Due to the remote location of Island Lake Metro Fire Station 9 and Battalion 3 would respond. He asked if the Committee had reviewed the Rural Fire agreement. All members responded yes.

Boyd asked about the Green Lake request – what happens next for Rural Fire?

Sedlacek stated that it will depend on many factors as allocations change. However, if Green Lake and Whitewater left, he would be out of a job. Costs for different types of fire service: Rural = approx. ¾ mill, Metro = 2 mills, Peninsula Township – 2 mills.

Kuncaitis asked what was Rural Fire's biggest weakness and strength.

Sedlacek stated that the weakest link is manpower numbers. Equipment and skill is the strength. Ten more members would be ideal to add to the force.

Galligan asked about the payment for volunteers. Sedlacek stated that Rural Fire pays on a point system and some Township's pay above that themselves.

Boyd asked if there has ever been an event that no volunteers showed. The answer was never, not in 30 years. He further added that this is why we belong to Rural Fire.

Boyd further asked about the size of a staff that would be required to man our own department.

Sedlacek stated that we would need 3 shifts with folks on call – 6 people minimum.

Kuncaitis asked about the bickering that appears to be going on between Metro and Rural.

Sedlacek said it is fireman talk. When it's quiet, there is smack talk. When it is busy they are fireman and do their jobs. He would further like to hire staff if the money was available.

Kuncaitis asked about the what-ifs if Green Lake pulls out.

Sedlacek said that he would promote the usage of Rural Fire's fund balance to temporarily address the issue and then a re-evaluation would be in order.

Miller introduced Eileen Hedin and Chris Weizafel from Elk Rapids EMS. Elk Rapids EMS and Fire work independently of one another.

Stewart asked if Rural Fire was running on a Master Plan or Business Plan system.

Sedlacek stated that upon his arrival he established a set of goals and he is still working on these goals. He uses ISO and NFPA to help establish needs as well as common sense.

Hedin explained that her EMS unit has upgraded to limited advanced life support status and that they currently have 6 specialists with one specialist on duty or call 24/7. She briefly discussed the Bennett Bill that allows EMS units to become completely functional over a 4 year timeframe.

Miller asked about the number of runs by Elk Rapids EMS and is interested in what we might be able to accomplish here in Whitewater.

Hedin said that she was happy to learn that we had the number of volunteers that we have and felt that we might be better equipped to provide back up to them. They currently address 390 runs per year. She added that they have installed a scanner at their station as to address boarders better as Elk Rapids is served by Antrim County Dispatch and Whitewater/Acme by Grand Traverse Dispatch providing back-up. Elk Rapids EMS has a small dedicated staff, but similar to ours, it is aging too.

It was the consensus of the committee that the neighboring townships need to better coordinate with one another.

Kuncaitis asked if doubling the number of runs that our EMS currently handles is something that they could handle.

Hedin commented on their scheduling system. They have a total of 13 people 6 ALS and 7 BLS to draw from. The station is manned from 6 AM to 6 PM with one person at \$12.35/hour with no benefits and one on call person at \$2.20/hour. At night two people are on call at \$2.20 per hour each.

Boyd asked that Hedin critique us.

She offered that we need to schedule our EMS folks as you don't need 6 volunteers to show up in most cases.

Weizafel offered the following information regarding how Fire service works in Milton Township: They had 97 runs in 2009 with two fire stations. The newer building on Cherry Avenue was built for about 500k. They have a dedicated fire fund and a population of 2500. Their volunteers report to separate stations based on their base location. They are also trying to reduce their ISO rating. They currently have 2 pumpers, 2 tankers, 2 brush trucks, 2 four-wheelers, a point truck and assorted equipment shared between the two stations.

Hedin offered to assist the township with preparing schedule as this aid her in determining that we are the right choice for 1st response mutual aid back-up.

Stewart added that a ladder truck is essential to the needs of the Tribe's East Bay operations.

Next meeting – March 1, 2010 at 7:00PM.

Meeting Adjourned – 9:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Leslie Meyers