

DRAFT

Whitewater Township Emergency Services Subcommittee
January 12, 2010 Minutes

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

Present: Emerson, MacLean, Pat Miller (replacing Acker), Kuncaitis, Boyd, Galligan, Blakeslee, Goss, Recording Secretary Meyers and 7 members of the public.

Boyd reminded the committee that the three goals originally assigned to them shall be listed on every agenda. They were reiterated as follows:

1. What services are needed?
2. What affiliations should be utilized?
3. What facilities will then be needed?

The minutes from the December 29, 2009 meeting were accepted.

Boyd added that he places importance on our current services as follows:

1. Ambulance – you cannot replace a life.
2. Police – they deal with violent situations.
3. Fire – you can replace everything else but a life.

Emerson agrees. 70% of all fire calls are ambulance related.

Miller, Blakeslee and Galligan agree.

MacLean feels that fire should move to the number two slot as you cannot replace a life.

Kuncaitis asked why the need for the prioritization.

Boyd stated that by prioritizing, facility needs will follow.

Kuncaitis stated that for discussion purposes, he is ok with the prioritization.

Goss added that ambulance is the most important and that further training is needed so that they can perform.

Emerson presented the following ambulance information:

- We currently own 1 1997 ambulance.
- They are the only ambulance in area – nearest is Fife Lake and Elk Rapids.
- Ambulance calls are rated on a 1 to 3 priority
 1. Priority 1 – Eminent Danger (Both Whitewater and North Flight are dispatched)
 2. Priority 2 – Non Eminent but potentially life threatening if needless delay in care (Both Whitewater and North Flight Dispatched)
 3. Non-urgent condition (Only Whitewater is dispatched)
- There are 4 classifications for Ambulance Response Team Members
 1. Basic Response – All our members are certified for Basic Response.

2. Basic EMT – ½ of our members have reached this next level of certification.
 3. EMT Specialist – the starting point for Advanced Life Support. None of our members have reached this level of training.
 4. EMT- Paramedic – the highest level of training
- The membership would like to pursue advanced life support training.
 - ALS – Advanced Life Support (the easiest way to summarize this is that these professionals can utilize medications).
 - BLS – Basic Life Support (these professionals cannot utilize meds).
 - All ambulance services in the County are independent – not affiliated with Metro or Rural Fire.
 - Feels that there is a need for a second ambulance.
 1. 8 to 9 calls last year required a second ambulance.
 2. If transport from a call is necessary, our ambulance is out of service for approximately 1.5 hours.
 3. A few years ago the ambulance broke down at a scene, which required towing and no ambulance available for 3 weeks.
 - Rescue Vehicle – a basic emergency vehicle that is not used for transport.
 - ECHO Unit – an advanced emergency vehicle that is not used for transport.

Miller asked if the township had the staff to support a second ambulance.

Emerson stated that we have ten trained and 1 currently in training. If a new ambulance is secured, there will be a need for additional members.

Boyd asked the question, should we secure the training or the ambulance first?

Emerson responded that an ambulance was needed first. In order to provide a full service, EMT-Paramedic staffed ambulance, we will need to have someone in place 24/7.

Boyd stated that this lends itself to why some of the amenities of the previously proposed fire station would be needed – cooking facilities, lounge, weight room, etc.

Galligan feels that ALS is necessary and that Fire and Ambulance need to be housed together.

MacLean agreed adding that she feels a second ambulance is necessary if we choose to run the ambulance like a business.

Emerson stated that if we were to provide full service ambulance, we would then service Acme, Fife Lake, Union and the west side of Kalkaska. Currently our service boundary line is the Acme/Whitewater Township line. A call screen determines whom will be dispatched.

Kuncaitis added that if new equipment is needed, why it is needed should be documented.

Vaughn Harshfield, a member of the audience asked if it were conceivable that when pagers went off for notification of ambulance dispatch, no one responded.

“Yes” replied Emerson.

Harshfield further commented that the Township needs to fill in this blank – it is a weak process.

The casino being on the Township line can cause issues and with the new entrance be relocated to Acme, Acme now becomes primary for response. With the absence of an ambulance in Acme, a rescue vehicle with no transport capabilities is dispatched.

The group next reviewed and commented on the Article “Taking the Heat” from the MTA.

Kuncaitis reported that the article was strong on trust, open communications and cooperation. It appears that Metro, Rural and the other concerned agencies should get together and practice this.

Boyd asked whether the Township should treat ambulance as an opportunity.

Galligan added that we definitely need to meet with Rural, Metro and North Flight to further review the options.

Kuncaitis added that bargaining this out could uncover other options or opportunities such as a satellite office for North Flight within the Township.

Boyd directed Meyers to find a representative for North Flight to talk with the committee as central dispatch follows the policy that they are given in terms of whom is dispatched. We can establish a list of questions to provide them so that a healthy discussion can take place.

Miller stated that it looked as though we had 3 options:

1. Leave ambulance status quo.
2. Move ahead with additional equipment and training.
3. Find a way to expand North Flight’s services with a satellite location.

Boyd next addressed the pertinent results from the Planning Commission’s fall survey, specifically question #3. With regard to fire, ambulance and police we aren’t doing bad but there is room for improvement. Many said they were neutral or had no opinion.

Blakeslee offered that she was one of the many that responded neutral as she has never had a need for the services.

Galligan stated that the ambulance has definitely been there for him on several occasions.

Boyd stated that we need to tactfully call the mutual aid agreement on the carpet.

Kuncaitis said that pg 11, third column, of the “Handling the Heat” article offered NFPA (National Fire Prevention Administration) has adopted NFPA 1710 and 1720 standards for departments and that we should look at these documents and that it would make a great starting point for further discussions.

Galligan thinks we must take a step back. He drew attention to the Intergovernmental Agreement and associated resolutions. The Township Board should not be involved in Fire issues as the agreement and resolution gives the authority of fire services to Rural Fire. If the Township is going to run the Fire Department, then we don’t need Rural Fire.

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Kuncaitis further directed the committee to review the Intergovernmental Agreement - pg 3 VI – Delegation of Authority.

Galliagan added that the Township needs to resolve to either stay out of the fire business or leave Rural.

Boyd directed Meyers to request the addition of a review of the Intergovernmental Agreement & Resolutions to the Township Board's next regular meeting agenda.

MacLean asked if this was the proper time to take this issue to the Township Board. Isn't our job to make recommendations to the Board?

Boyd stated that this issue should be addressed by the Board. If there are factors, policies or the like that have changed since the Agreement was initiated, the committee needs this information in order to move forward and make an informed recommendation.

The committee agreed.

Next up for discussion – Costs associated with Fire Service. Rural Fire costs us about \$100,000 per year.

Kuncaitis stated that this number is fuzzy as certain items aren't all-inclusive.

Meyers was directed to obtain the operations expenses for the previously proposed fire station from the Clerk.

The committee reviewed the department run numbers.

PIA – Personal Injury Accident

PDA – Property Damage Accident

N/T – No Transport

The majority of runs are ambulance related.

Galligan added if we had ALS certification, we could recoup expenses.

Kuncaitis warned committee members to not get emotionally attached to the issue. Put the information out to the public and let them make the decision to financially support possible expansion.

Kim Halstead, member of the audience, asked why there was not an agreement with the tribe for the provision of fire services like other tribes and municipalities in the State?

Galligan asked how we were doing on getting a representative from the Tribe for our committee.

Boyd explained that Supervisor Lake was still working on this and was awaiting word from Chairman Bailey who has been out of town.

Kuncaitis asked what happens if we don't provide ambulance service.

It was the consensus of the committee that this would not be popular.

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Tim Shafer, member of the audience, asked if we are now required and/or have a legal obligation to continue to provide ambulance service since we have been providing it.

Boyd directed Meyers to get that answer.

Next meeting scheduled for January 20, 2010 at 7:00 PM at Township Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Meyers
Recording Secretary