

Emergency Services Meeting
March 23, 2010
Minutes

Chairman Boyd called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present: Blakeslee, Miller, Goss, Boyd, Emerson, MacLean, Recording Secretary Meyers and 6 members of the public.

Absent: Galligan, Stewart, Kuncaitis

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted.

Chief Joe Baker of the Bellaire District Fire Authority presented about their department. The Authority was created in 1974 when the Village of Bellaire was no longer able to head up a Fire Department. A non-expiring SAD was established that allows up to 5 mills to be levied. Each Township (Kearney and Forest Home) appoints two members and one member is appointed at-large. For the past several years, the millage rate has been 1 ¼ mil. The amount fluctuated throughout the 1990's and left no room for a capital improvement fund.

The department provides fire and rescue, transport and ALS is provided by Allied Services which is supported by an 11 townships and 5/8 mil from each. Allied is manned 24/7, in separate facilities (2 – one in Bellaire and one in Mancelona).

The Department currently has the following:

- 30 paid on call members
- 2 grass brush rigs
- 2 2000 gallon tankers
- 2 Class A pumpers
- 1 Water Finder
- 1 Medium Rescue Vehicle
- 6 ice water rescue suits
- 3600' of 5" hose
- 13' inflatable boat
- 1 ice walking platform

They have an auxiliary that is made up of mostly wives of the members. They provide food and drinks on calls and have just begun fundraising efforts.

Baker was hired full time in November of 2009. Prior, the department utilized a volunteer chief.

The department services Summit and Cedar River Villages, portions of torch Lake, Lake Bellaire, the Village of Bellaire, Kearney, Forest Home and on a contractual basis, portions of Custer Townships.

Training includes inviting their neighboring departments and mass training happens when possible. They utilize the Regional Training Center and have in-house training for up to 30 people. They currently have two training per month for fire and one for rescue. Members are required to attend 75% of the training to maintain their status as a volunteer.

The Department is trained for “operational level” HAZ-MAT, ie. preparing for the tech level team to take over. In the event that tech level HAZ-MAT is needed, either Traverse City or A-1 out of Kalkaska are called in.

The Fire Chief answers to a fire board – they lead him. Four of the five fire board members are retired firefighters.

In 2000, the Department established a 10 year plan. They performed all identified projects in 5 years and revised the plan in 2005 which is good until 2015. His 28 years with the department has been his biggest asset in moving the department forward.

The Department currently doesn't schedule and they have approximately 15-18 show up per call.

Chief Baker was asked who the department addresses “difficult to reach areas?” They currently have a Class A pumper that is all wheel drive. Most of their issues are around the lakes, not the resort. Many of the issues are unknown and will not be known until an emergency happens.

Volunteer ages range from 21 on up. Base pay for a call is \$22 (2 hours), longer calls lead to a second call being posted to their timesheet.

There is a weight room in the station that is used daily but not by all members. There is no formal training/fitness program as of yet.

While the district covers over 72 square miles, the station is centrally located and does not see a need for a second station in the immediate future.

The core membership is located within the Village limits. The service area has about 3500 full time residents and in the summer the populations swells to almost 10,000. There were 256 calls for 2009.

Once trained and a safety inspection on their personal vehicle, they may purchase their own lights with permission of the Chief.

Chief Baker is currently pursuing a degree in Fire Science.

The Fire Authority Command Vehicle is his own personal vehicle.

The original building was 75 x 70 (a Butler Steel Building) and has had two additions now measuring 95 x 90. No construction manger was used in any of the construction projects.

Wayne Clatter, member of the public, asked if he does code enforcement. Baker stated that he is working on his certification to perform this task.

Harshfield, member of the public, asked if there is a minimum hours of training required for firefighters. Baker responded that the number of fields that must be trained in is identified, but is not defined in hours.

Chief Baker was thanked by the Committee for his time. He then provided the committee with copies of his budget.

Next, Miller introduced Rob Hall, transportation supervisor for MDOT, Lake Township Trustee and member of the fire board of the newly created Lake City Area Fire Department.

Hall informed the Committee that a determination to leave the existing Authority that covered 5 townships and the City of Lake City in Missaukee County, last summer.

Lake Township contributed 5 times the financial commitment of any other member and was left to deal with most of the headaches. An alliance was formed between Lake Township and the City of Lake City in August. A letter was sent to the Authority stating that if a list of issues were not resolved by October 1, the new alliance would split from the Authority and create a separate department.

The City had a vacant fire station from before the 1996 merger with the Fire Authority. The building will serve as the new base of the Area Fire Department. A grant from USDA -0 Rural Development was secured for outfitting the 17 volunteers. They entered into a lease program for a pumper truck that allows payments to be made and if anything happens and the department folds, the lease program allows for the truck to be returned at anytime with no further financial commitment due with \$1 due at the end of the lease to purchase. To recap, they lease/purchased a new pumper (190k), purchased a used pumper for 40k and received a free tanker through DNRE/Coast Guard that required 18k to refurbish and a 22k grant from USDA-Rural Development to outfit the firefighters.

The total cost to create the new department – 53k from the City and Township and a payment of 25k per year for 9 years to pay for the lease/purchase of the new pumper.

While it was a tough call in this economy, it was felt by both municipalities that they needed to cut their losses at some point and start over. It was also felt by the Township and City that sometimes things get too big (which was a bad thing) and their previous authority did.

Volunteers are paid \$20 per call and \$20 per training. Ambulance is thru the County.

They are currently in the process of shopping for a truck. Have hired an interim chief at \$5000 per year and an assist for \$2000. The interim chief came from the previous authority and has now determined that he will stay.

The new department is planning for about 120 runs per year. Current budget is set at 79k with an additional 25k coming from run charges.

Plans for training to work with all departments in area to share training and the associated costs.

Hall recommends the following:

- Have an auditor determine the depreciated equipment value of the current equipment.
- Get a five year run average to determine income that can be generated.
- Switch to a billing company for fire run charges. Even though the company charges 10%, they found that they collect 20% more this way as opposed to allowing debt to go uncollected.
- Rewrite the Fire Charge Ordinance. They upped the capture charge for firefighting and rescue from \$500 to \$750 and \$100 to \$300 respectfully. This way, those that use pay and those that don't, don't.

It was determined that while the Emergency Services Committee has been meeting for over three months, Lake City is further ahead as they knew the direction that they were going up front and that Whitewater is still in the discovery stage.

Hall added that while they were looking for the best bang for their buck, it wasn't entirely a financial decision. What was best for the residents was determined.

Clatter, member of the public, asked what the future plans of the new department were.

Hall stated that the next steps included preplans for all commercial and agricultural buildings.

The committee thanked Hall and wished them well in the new venture that officially starts April 1.

Clatter asked the Committee if they had been successful with SAFER grants.

Meyers said that since Rural is not a Authority, SAFER grants do not apply.

Clatter added that Metro has not been successful either.

Halstead, member of the audience asked where the Township got the money for the grant writing that has taken place to date for the proposed fire station.

Boyd responded that 130k came from the tribe for research, development and design of emergency services. The remaining money will most likely come from the general fund.

The committee next determined that they would like to hear from Supervisor Lake and Chief Stites of Battalion 3.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 31, 2010 at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Meyers, Planning/Zoning Administrator