

The three goals originally assigned to the Committee:

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

Ambulance Facts:

- We currently own 1 1997 ambulance. The next nearest is Fife Lake and Elk Rapids.
- 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.
- 8 to 9 calls last year required a second ambulance.
- If transport from a call is necessary, our ambulance is out of service for approximately 1.5 hours.
- A few years ago the ambulance broke down at a scene, which required towing and no ambulance available for 3 weeks.

North Flight Presentation:

- ALS requires 24/7 schedules for staffing.
- BLS has come a long way since its inception as basic first aid.
- Supports the Township in securing a new ambulance.
- Ambulance service must be subsidized unless there is a population center of 50,000+ in which to support it.
- Consensus of Committee that a new ambulance is necessary.
- Cost of a new ambulance was determined to be between 100k and 150K plus 50k to equip it. **(Actual costs to follow)**
- Consensus that there is a need to continue BLS and secure a new ambulance, not a second ambulance. The current ambulance needs to serve as backup.

Rural Fire Presentation :

- 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.
- Membership contributions to the Rural Fire Fund are based on 1/3 Population, 1/3 number of runs and 1/3 SEV.
- Future plans include: improving the ISO rating and a 15% decrease in the budget.
- The weakest link is manpower numbers while equipment and skill is the strength. Ten more members would be ideal to add to the force.

Metro Fire Presentation -

- Ten year plan includes adding ambulance service.
- Metro thinks and acts as one department, not four. This is something that Rural isn't doing per Chief Parker. Each station is acting independently beating to different drummers.
- 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.

Peninsula Township Presentation:

- 1976 millage included funding for second station. Current millage is 9/10 of a mil.
- 1989 first full time non-volunteer was hired as Chief & 1992 a second full timer.
- In 2008, a second shift (4:30 to Midnight) added accounting for two more full timers.
- They have about 400 runs per year.
- Any money left in the fire/ambulance fund is added to the “savings” account for future purchases. A commitment is made to make sure as much money as possible goes into this fund.
- The pending budget calls for staffing of a 12 hour shift each on Saturday and Sunday.
- Their ultimate goal is for a 24 hour operation and a new facility.
- Current annual budget of Fire/Ambulance for two stations - \$490,000.
- Run volume doesn't support ALS

Bellaire Area Fire Authority:

- Authority was created in 1974
- A non-expiring SAD was established that allows up to 5 mills to be levied.
- The rate has been 1 ¼ mil on average the past several years.
- Chief was hired full time in November of 2009. Previously utilized a volunteer chief.
- Services Summit and Cedar River Villages, portions of Torch Lake, Lake Bellaire, the Village of Bellaire, Kearney, Forest Home and portions of Custer Township.
- The Fire Chief answers to a fire board.
- In 2000, a 10 year plan was established. They performed all identified projects in 5 years and revised the plan in 2005 which is good until 2015.
- There were 256 calls for 2009.
- Once trained and a safety inspections on personal vehicles, may purchase their own lights with permission of the Chief.
- The Fire Authority Command Vehicle is his own personal vehicle.

Lake City Fire Authority: Determination to leave the existing Authority that covered 5 townships and the City of Lake City in Missaukee County took place last summer.

- The City had a vacant fire station from before the 1996 merger with the Fire Authority.
- 22K grant from USDA - Rural Development was secured for outfitting the 17 volunteers.
- Entered into a lease program for a pumper truck that allows payments to be made and if department folds, program allows for truck to be returned no further financial commitment. \$1 due at the end of the lease to purchase.
- Purchased a used pumper for 40k.
- Received a free tanker through DNRE/Coast Guard that required 18k to refurbish.
- Have hired an interim chief at \$5000 per year and an assist for \$2000.
- 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.

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.
- Utilize 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.

Battalion 3 Presentation:

- The auxiliary needs to be re-established.
- Given the choice between the current equipment or other used equipment, Department would prefer the current equipment as they know where it has been and put through.
- Whatever is decided by this committee and the Board should include a business plan.
- The majority of all equipment is owned by Rural. Why Whitewater Township is supplying so much if we don't own it? Why isn't Rural purchasing all of the equipment?
- Concern with the wording of the contract as anything the Township purchase becomes the property of Rural.
- Weakness is the lack of communication with neighboring departments. Strength is the dedication and commitment of the volunteers.

Additional Findings:

- It appears that Metro, Rural and the other concerned agencies should get together and practice open communication and cooperation.
- 70% of all fire calls are ambulance related.
- The Intergovernmental Agreement – the 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.
- Committee is bringing to light that Rural may be in breach of contract as they are not fulfilling their obligation.
- What happens if we don't provide ambulance service while it would be unpopular, it is not required by law or statute.
- Fire Protection and other emergency services for the Grand Traverse Band - trust property is entitled to the same services as other citizens within the service area and should not be assessed charges that are not levied against others in the service area.
- Marketing and promotion of Township needs - the facts must be presented and it must be stressed that we need a new ambulance not a second ambulance. Further, we need an emergency services building not a fire barn.
- If Whitewater chooses to go out on their own, what good is a new facility without any equipment? Currently the Township has a building even if it doesn't meet all the needs.
- What are the department's needs not just their wants?
- At the present time a Master Plan for the Acme/Whitewater property is non-existent. As Acme and Whitewater will be the obvious next growth area of the County, it has been recommended that the Band develop both a Master Plan for the property and business feasibility. Until then it is difficult for the Band to assist Acme and Whitewater with their attempts at a Master Plan that can quantify the Band's future plans. He also stated that a "master land use map" has been circulated that shows an amphitheater,

etc. The map is not the plan and was done for the purpose of tribal needs in working through the BIA.

- Discussion was had regarding the difference between a Millage and SAD. Mileages' are voted on by the people and is what is currently in place for fire protection. Township SAD's can be approved by the Board but can be overturned with a petition signed by 20% of the affected area. In this case, the affected area would be the entire Township.
- The image of the Fire Department is not positive.
- The general consensus eliminated Metro from the process
- It was a consensus of the Committee that the Chief stated that if Green Lake and Whitewater pulled out, he would be out of a job and Rural would use their fund balance of approximately 300k to float the next few years.
- Consensus of Battalion 3 that a move toward independence was preferable but staying with Rural and putting them on notice has merit as well.
- A fire board is necessary –but not possible while contracting with Rural.
- The 1995 contract needs to be worked on – but can 9 townships work on a new contract that all agree upon?
- Nothing happens quickly. If we work with the Tribe and Rural gets it together, we can all go the table together. It is a win-win situation.
- It is not appropriate at this time to pursue ALS status.

Motion by Kuncaitus, supported by Galligan to recommend to the Township Board that the Emergency Services Committee investigate a joint venture between Whitewater Township and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. **Motion carried unanimously.**

It was the consensus that Rural Fire be informed of the recommendation and that it was predicated by the shortcomings of Rural Fire as seen by the Committee.

Motion by Kuncaitus, supported by Blakeslee to recommend to the Township Board that a legal opinion be provided on Emergency Services Funding – both Millage and SAD. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Motion by Kuncaitus, supported by MacLean to recommend that the Township Board investigate the viability and usage of the Fire Department Auxiliary. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Motion by Kuncaitus, supported by MacLean to recommend that the Township Board facilitate a joint meeting/open house of the area emergency services agencies to share the capabilities of each agency with one another. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Motion by Goss, supported by Kuncaitus to recommend that the Township Board purchase a new ambulance and create an 8-year depreciation schedule to purchase a new ambulance at the end of the depreciation schedule. This will allow for the current ambulance to be used as a backup. The intent is to establish a set rotation schedule to maintain two ambulances within the Township. **Motion carried unanimously.**