

Emergency Services Committee  
Minutes  
April 14, 2010

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Boyd at 6:00 PM.

Present: Blakeslee, Miller, Kuncaitus, Boyd, MacLean, Emerson, Goss, Galligan, Meyers and 7 members of the audience.

Excused: Stewart

Minutes of the March 31, 2010 meeting were accepted.

The Committee discussed the Pro's & Con's list that was compiled from all members was presented.

## Rural

### Pros

- Wide range of agreement area to draw from (9 dept.)
- Share cost of capital expenditures/purchases
- Familiarity
- Have some say in services
- Training and insurances
- We would not need to do anything, no further information needed for the committee or the township board
- The community members are used to it. No need to educate or explain. Because even if something is not necessarily good, if it has been part of the system for a long time nobody questions
- No need for even considering a new building because all the money goes to fixing or replacing equipment and we likely won't get any new trucks for many years
- Volume purchasing power
- Cost of operation covered by more than one source
- Rural fire has responsibility for all administrative support, records, training, equipment, etc

### Cons

- Rural Board determines our needs and what we obtain
- We do not always receive equipment other stations obtain
- Not always funding available to purchase everything needed by all member departments. (upgrade equipment.
- Cut off of access from them to us when an occurrence @ 5 mile area happens
- Political issues
- Double dip costs

- Not providing all needed equipment
- Lack of a future plan
- No plan for ambulance service
- Likely won't get new equipment
- We seem to be buying equipment either rural fire should be providing or we are buying equipment that gets turned over to them.
- With possibility of other townships dropping rural we may be jumping off a sinking ship early enough that we won't get caught in the under-tow.
- Does not have system set up well Misguided/disorganized
- Receives dedicated funds and can't properly fund all department needs
- Not well planned/managed for future considerations

Comments:

Miller – thinks the group buying (volume purchasing power) idea is misguided. With so many independent departments around the state, this idea isn't enough to sway them.

Boyd – concerned with the double dip costs.

Galligan - interested in the costs of each option.

Boyd – considered adding financing to the agenda but added that this is not what the committee was tasked with. With the possibility of other Township's dropping Rural, we need to consider the financial aspects as well.

Harshfield (member of the audience) – Feels Rural may be in violation of their contract with us and that this item should be added to the Rural Con List.

Kuncaitus - Feels that when the contract was written it was well intended. It worked then but no one has bothered to update it.

Halstead (member of the audience) – questioned whether Rural had been called out for breach of contract and the possibility of losing the current millage.

Boyd – Rural had not been informed by Whitewater Township or any other community (to his knowledge) that there was a concern with the contract.

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.

Metro

Pros

- Smaller debt with bonding ability

- Strong community & training component than rural
- Removes Township Board from fire service
- Very good business plan and training
- Planning for ambulance service

#### Cons

- It's their way or the highway no room for debate
- Funding structure set-up where communities fund other community major expenditures
- Too stringent community programs are generalized
- We would lose firemen we have
- They financially strap townships with bonds and other commitments
- IF they man our station or Acme station how long would it take someone to get to the north or east end of the township
- Stated no funding to replace current equipment
- Cost too much money
- Still would need ambulance service, he did not seem interested in providing
- Cut off access when occurrence at 5 mile happens
- Political issues
- Double dip costs
- No Township input
- May get too large
- High cost

#### Comments:

Emerson- concerned that if access were cut at 5 Mile Road, alternative routes would lead to a minimum of 15 minutes for services to reach them.

Galliagan- felt that to speed things up, Metro should be dropped from consideration.

Halstead (member of the audience) – the “lifetime” obligation to Metro is too great.

MacLean – felt that our firemen are not interested in Metro. The intent of this is not to loose our firemen.

Galligan – as a retired Board Member, the threat of firemen leaving because of a particular issue has been thrown around for years.

Kuncaitus – Everyone hopes or feels that the world will fall apart when they have left their position but this isn't the case. In all fairness to all departments – there is always some form of dissention.

Arbenowske (member of the audience) – has had personal experience with Metro treating him as inept.

The general consensus eliminated Metro from the process.

## Independent

### Pros

- Township can address emergency needs
- May be more personnel loyalty
- Control of cost
- Own equipment (new or old)
- Represent our residence (not the county)
- We have an opportunity to allow our township to lead, not follow the lead of the county (i.e. Septage Plant, Grand Vision, etc.)
- The Casino utilize the assets that we can draw on, not what is given to us from the county
- Charge/collect fees on power lines down, extrication, building inspections
- Able to obtain grants and other funding we cannot obtain now under rural fire
- Establish own operative plan, establish agenda, policy and procedure no outside influence
- Our community, our money, our decisions, our responsibility
- Financially we seem to be putting out enough money to cover the cost already
- We keep our firemen
- Gives the board the opportunity to show the community that it is being pro active on financial responsibility (possibly building trust)
- Full control of funding to put where the community feels it needs to be
- More flexibility to meet the community's needs/demands, better design control for the community
- Better community connections, the community's interest is their interest
- Ability to mate both fire and ambulance
- Ability to keep Whitewater tax money within the Township
- Ability to control the department's destiny without outside influence
- Develop civic pride between the tax payers and the fire department
- Develop a strong alliance with the Band

- Will need to establish a fire department auxiliary to help support department activities and with additional funding

#### Cons

- More difficult to fund major expenditures i.e. fire trucks
- May increase some expenditures currently covered under an agreement
- Have to make sure we have very committed people to dig in get the ball rolling and keep it rolling
- Anything new is always scary and exciting all at the same time but we have time to make sure everything gets lined up
- We will have to look at a 2-5 year plan for a new building
- Our community, our money, our decisions, our responsibility – if we blow it we have no one else to blame
- Funding to purchase equipment needed to operate a fire service
- Purchase needed equipment
- Increase millage to cover cost/responsible for all cost
- Difficult- we need to change our means of funding our departments (fire & ambulance)
- Our staff is old school & there needs to be a change. New management skills and leadership.
- Township has very little money set aside for start up cost (need input from the community)
- Mutual aide?
- Training Shortfall
- High Cost for all equipment needed
- Will take a strong concerted effort among the fire chief, the Township Board and perhaps an appointed fire board
- Will need the total support of fire personnel
- Will need to develop a better view of the fire department with the taxpayers
- Will have to move on a new fire station

#### Comments:

Harshfield (member of the audience) – reminded the Committee that they were informed at a previous meeting that if Green Lake pulled out there would be no more Rural.

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.

Kuncaitus – Does the Township want to and have the resources to run fire and ambulance or do we allow someone else to do it i.e. re-negotiate the Rural contract.

Boyd – the Township must step up and spend the taxpayer's money more prudently.

Emerson – Consensus of Battalion 3 that a move toward independence was preferable but staying with Rural and putting them on notice has merit as well. Blair Township is happy with their independence contrary to what we have heard.

Galligan – questions whether the Band will help us financially.

Boyd – would like to have the Band involved as much as possible.

MacLean – feels that via Stewart, we have a commitment from the Band. How much is yet to be determined. The Committee was agreed.

Discussion held on securing water service from the Band and its future use.

Boyd – feels that we will get assistance from the Band and wants to take a recommendation back to the Board that asks for the Township to begin negotiations with the Band.

Galligan – concerns with mutual aid and training if we venture out on our own.

Emerson – there will be no change and we would need to join the regional training center for training continuance.

Kuncaitus – feels that we should make recommendation to the Board to create a subcommittee of this committee to investigate a joint venture between Whitewater Township and the Band for emergency services and police protection. This should serve as a wake-up call for Rural.

MacLean – Similar to Lake Township and Lake City – telling the authority to get their ducks in a row. When it didn't happen, they put in their notice to quit.

Miller – the Township is half way to independence. We currently run our own EMS and have administration. He asked if the replacement for the Chief currently being groomed is from the same mold as the current Rural regime.

Emerson stated that he didn't know.

Harshfield (member of the audience) – a fire board is necessary.

Galligan – the 1995 contract needs to be worked on – but can 9 townships work on a new contract that all agree upon?

Kuncaitus – reminded the Committee that 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.

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.**

Kuncaitus suggested that PR issues be added to the next agenda.

Next meeting scheduled for April 27, 2010 at 6:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.