

Emergency Services Committee
Minutes
March 8, 2010

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

Present: Blakeslee, Miller, Goss, Boyd, MacLean, Emerson, Stewart, Kuncaitis, Galligan, Planning/Zoning Administrator Meyers and three members of the public.

Emerson introduced our guest, Richard VanderMey who addressed the Committee:

- The department started in 1943 with volunteers, which operated for about three years before being turned over to the Township in 1946.
- They have always been a stand-alone department.
- Shortly after WWII they began ambulance service. Prior to ambulance service, the Township was dependent on the local funeral parlors, which focused more on dead than the living.
- Currently there are two BLS Ambulances, one at each station.
- In 1976 an SAD was established to provide both Ambulance and Fire Service including the funding for a second station.
- While the township has the ability to levy up to 10 mils, they have never been above 1 ¼ mils and are currently at 9/10 of a mil.
- In 1984 an addition was added to Station 1.
- In 1989, the first full time non-volunteer was hired as Chief.
- 1992 saw the hiring of a second full timer.
- In 2008, a second shift (4:30 to Midnight) was added accounting for two more full timers.
- They have about 400 runs per year.
- Volunteers are paid \$15 for the first hour and \$10 for each subsequent hour.
- 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.
- They do not operate a line item budget.
- The pending budget calls for additional 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 population is 5400 with an average age of 52.
- Current annual budget of Fire/Ambulance for two stations - \$490,000.
- Run volume doesn't support ALS and they are backup by North Flight and Traverse City.
- At this time, while they do plan on a new facility, the process has not yet begun.
- Currently the department owns the following 4 million dollars worth of equipment:
 - Two Class A Rescue Engines
 - Two Tankers
 - 2 Ambulances
 - 1 Rescue Truck
 - One Water Supply Truck
 - 17' Rescue Boat
 - One Snowmobile
 - One Off-Road Rescue Vehicle

- One Wildfire Vehicle
- One Command Vehicle (used by the Chief)
- 1/3 of the Township is serviced by a water system with hydrants.
- The remaining areas are serviced by the Tankers and a water point on each side of the peninsula.

Emerson asked why Peninsula has not made an alliance with either Metro or Rural.

VanderMey stated that they have always been a standalone department and that while they have been approached by both Rural and Metro, the Board has never shown an interest as they have wished to establish their own destiny.

Boyd asked if a new building should be the priority or equipment.

VanderMey answered that 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.

Stewart asked about mutual aid agreements that Peninsula Township has.

VanderMey said that they have mutual aid agreements with Elmwood, Traverse City, Blair, Metro and Rural.

Goss asked about shared training opportunities.

VanderMey stated that most training is done independently. Exceptions include the Special Op's mentioned by Chief Parker the week before and that when controlled burn situations arise, all area departments are invited to participate.

Kuncaitis asked about any boundary issues that they may face.

VanderMey stated that in the area that borders Traverse City, both departments are dispatched. While mapping and dispatch has come a long way, they err on the side of caution.

Blakeslee asked about their plans for a new station – Did they plan to consolidate into one facility?

VanderMey answered yes – but if not possible or feasible, they would look to adding on to station 1 the following: Bays, Sleeping rooms, workout room, laundry, kitchen, etc.

Vaughn Harshfield, member of the audience, asked what Peninsula's ISO rating was.

VanderMey said that the portion served by a water system has a current rating of 6 and the remainder of the Township is a 9. If they go to 24 hour staffing the 9 would likely become an 8 maybe 7 but without a water supply and the staging times it will never get any better.

Kuncaitis asked for a "magic number" to consider the move from BLS to ALS.

The Chief said that calls would need to be over 50% as the related costs to make the jump are high and that without a strong number of calls, staff finds it tough to keep their skill sets in place. (i.e. use it or lose it).

He further explained that the Department has a very active Auxiliary/Association which he purposely is not a member of. By not being involved, he feels that they can better manage this function amongst themselves and with the assistance of family and friends. The group (a 501(c)(3)) is quite active and mails a yearly newsletter to all property owners. The Association also advertises for all activities regarding the Department, oversees fundraisers, accepts donations, pays for much of the training and sells the green reflective address signs. With regard to the County Public Education Officer, they utilize their own funds and do not rely on that position.

Emerson excused himself at 7:00PM due to Fire Training.

At 7:10 PM, Chief VanderMey was thanked by the Committee for taking the time to meet with them. He stated that all information requested by the Committee will be forwarded shortly.

Goss stated that there is a lot of waterfront property in Peninsula Township which commands big tax dollars.

Kuncaitis reiterated that the Township needs to run the Fire Department like a business.

Blakeslee added that this makes sense as who would want to put money toward something that isn't managed well?

It was noted that Chief VanderMey regularly talked of the department's needs not wants. Also, that he knows exactly what is going on in the department as his presentation was given without notes and he had answers to all questions asked.

Miller offered information regarding the upcoming split/merger of Lake Township and Lake City from Missaukee County Authority. Due to the split, they (the new Lake City Area Fire Department) are starting over. They plan to be operational by April 1, 2010 and began the process that we are currently undertaking last fall. Should the Committee be interested, he will arrange for them to present at an upcoming meeting.

It was determined by the Committee that this is an excellent idea. Miller will make arrangements for the presentation immediately following the Bellaire Area Fire Department on March 23, 2010 at 8:00 PM.

Stewart commented that he was very impressed by the "layers" of mutual aid agreements that Peninsula Township has in place.

Kim Halstead, member of the audience, commented that the Committee needs to get the cost of all equipment needs – including the cost to purchase from Rural Fire.

Kuncaitis the Committee needed copies of the true budget numbers, including any and all figures that are buried within other departments. Along with that, what are the true numbers for ambulance? The Committee will need to make real decisions about the number of runs and the costs.

The Committee discussed the 10 mills issue. It takes a 2/3 vote of the people to overturn the SAD since it is already in place. If the Township should wish to roll Ambulance into the SAD it would have to go back to the people.

Meyers was asked to secure the Milton Township Fire budget and secure a report from the Fire Chief of runs with interval times including a fire service map similar to the one provided by Stewart from Boyne City. She was also asked to provide the Committee with the source of the Tactics Response sheet regarding the Casino.

Kuncaitis asked Stewart about future plans for the Tribe.

Stewart said that 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, he has recommended that the Band develop both a Master Plan for the property and a 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. He further added that he will provide the Committee with copies of all runs associated with the Casino for the past several years.

Creating a mutual aid agreement between the Township and the Casino for EMS/MFR was discussed.

Stewart also added that the Fire and Ambulance service for Peshawbestown is being re-established and will be a volunteer department with new blood.

Boyd stated that the township Board will be discussing the Fire and Ambulance budget on Wednesday night and invited all Committee members.

It was determined that once conclusions have been reached by the Committee that a formal letter of recommendation will be sent to the Township Board.

The draft minutes were deemed acceptable by the Committee.

Next Meeting – march 23, 2010.

Meeting Adjourned – 8:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leslie Meyers, Planning/Zoning Administrator