

Villages of Walworth and Fontana
Ad Hoc Joint Services Committee Meeting
July 28, 2009
6:30 P.M.

Present: Kinney, Nordmeyer, O'Connell, Petersen, Vanderbloemen, Watters. Also present: Larry Austin, Town of Walworth Supervisor; Wolfgang Nitsch, Fontana Fire Chief; Eddie Snyder, Walworth Trustee; Media Representatives from Walworth/Fontana Times and the Lake Geneva Regional News.

Chair Leroy Nordmeyer called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. Vanderbloemen/O'Connell motion to approve June minutes carried by ayes without negative vote.

Business: Discussion, Consideration, and Action on the following:

1. Paid on Premises Contract

Nordmeyer wants to focus on proposed contract for POP. He'd like to go on record that he appreciates the information gathered from Delavan Rescue Squad, but, in his opinion, it doesn't meet our needs and is not comparable to the Metro contract. Obviously that start date which was 8/1/09 would be different. We'd have to resolve where the Town of Walworth falls into the equation. Watters asked about termination of services. Termination is by providing 90 day notice to them by certified letter. Watters asked if the action Nordmeyer is looking for is to send this to the respective Boards for approval. Petersen noted that last month's minutes said that we have to discuss with Town of Walworth first to see where they're at. Walworth's contract with the Town goes through the end of current year. Watters said that what he's hearing is that the contract looks appropriate, but the uncertain conditions right now make us hesitant to commit. Nordmeyer thinks this contract is between the two municipalities with Metro. The dollar amount of the contract will not change. How the amount is allocated will be determined by whether the Town is a partner or not. Petersen is not in any position to take on additional expense without knowing what the Town is doing-- who pays for what will depend on the Town's participation. Nordmeyer asks if we want an attorney to look at this contract now. Petersen is willing to accept that cost, but Watters asked, if the committee is not willing to forward to the Boards yet, do we want to incur the expense of sending to an attorney? Austin gave an update on what the Town is doing. They have 3 proposed contracts out to Williams Bay, Fontana and Town of Delavan. Fontana will pick up the biggest part of it. All three fire departments have reviewed and approved.

2. Consolidation of Fire and Rescue Departments

Watters has put a lot of thought into what potentially this consolidation would look like.

1. Central commission where you have potentially 2 or 3 members from each board and a citizen expert appointed by board for swing vote. Commission would appoint chief, deputy chief and assistants as needed.
2. Determine the average call volume for villages over past 3 years. The second piece is fair value of equipment that would be contributed to the cause. Value is considered a contribution to the partnership. Add up the economic impact of call differential and equipment plus whatever sinking fund cash there is. In order to form a 50/50 partnership, one entity has to come up with a one time payment. Any customers in the future become a customer of the commission. Assuming call volume remains level, nothing needs to be done; if not, this can be made up on an annual basis. Equipment becomes an equal part of the commission.

Petersen thinks the first hurdle to get over is the commission appointing the chief. We're dealing with volunteers. They usually appoint their own officers. How many people would we lose? Let's not open the door to a full time service which is the slippery slope we get into when we go to POP. Watters's desire is that a combined armada of equipment, fire stations and existing volunteers is that you now have a larger force of capital, structure and personnel who will likely be challenged enough to retain a decent portion of its membership. Nordmeyer thinks there are close to 25-30 officers between the two fire departments and that's more than we need. Wolf says we also need to keep in mind that people before us envisioned this and that's why we have two departments. He was mentored by the people who were doing this since the 30's. He thinks the vision was that we needed separate departments so we could assist each other. He thinks we have already established a form of consolidation in that there are different pieces of equipment owned by several departments in Walworth Co. that are shared on MABAS calls. Watters thinks it's not the equipment of all the smaller communities, but what would be the requisite for a larger community. Is the equipment we have for two individual communities of 2500 people the same we would need for a community of 5000 people? Wolf doesn't know if we could save by combining depts. They just had an ISO inspection and have been told they're one pumper short. Petersen thinks our discussion is just creating more questions. Watters believes we should make a list of the questions so we know what we have to answer. Petersen thinks we should ask our own volunteers. Austin thinks we should think about a confidential survey to get honest answers. Wolf noted there are equipment differences, Fontana has water accidents; Walworth has farm accidents. There's also a big difference in the two Walworth Co. facilities they take patients to. Wolf noted that we get extra equipment through MABAS provided by other depts. without additional expense. Nordmeyer asked if the perception was that MABAS would go away. Wolf didn't think MABAS would go away. Watters has 2 questions that would go a long way to answer other questions: 1. If you had a single department for a municipality of 5000 people what would be the equipment requirements. 2. The number of volunteers who would/would not participate under a joint entity. He thinks Austin had a good point about the anonymous survey. The committee would like to go forward with that. Nordmeyer asked if Wolf had some specific questions. He's sure that as a group they could come up with questions. Wolf thinks we should convene in some type of closed session to look at the answers to these questions. Watters agrees. He'd suggest that one or two committee members summarize the results of the survey before they're brought to the committee for discussion. Watters believes we should solicit all 4 current chiefs for specific questions we want to ask. Nordmeyer will collect the questions and bring them back to the next committee meeting for discussion. In the meantime, Watters would be interested to find out what the requirements are for a municipality of 5,000 to 6,000 population to see if there's a potential savings there. Petersen suggested to Wolf he should go back to the ISO people and ask how the rating would change with a consolidation. Wolf thinks you can go to Lake Geneva, Elkhorn to see what they have and compare it with what our two villages have.

Peterson/O'Connell motion to adjourn carried by ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Schut

