

VILLAGE OF WALWORTH
VILLAGE OF FONTANA
Ad Hoc Joint Services Committee
December 17, 2007
1:00 P.M.

Chair Matt Long called the meeting to order at 1:00. Present at the meeting were Micki O'Connell, Pete Petersen, George Spadoni, LeRoy Nordmeyer, Rich Simonson and Long.

Discussion with Consultant Tim McGrath on Joint Services was the focus of the meeting. He introduced himself and gave a brief summary of his background (teacher, paramedic, firefighter) and consulting experience (consults on Emergency Services and Human Resources, doctoral in emergency services). He also noted that the advantage to having a consultant is that he's a neutral party.

Long stated that there have been prior discussions, but never at the Board member level. He also noted that we already share a sewer plant, a water interconnection and have a boundary agreement.

McGrath then answered several questions:

1. What drives other communities to consolidate? Usually what drives consolidations is the perception of the potential for significant cost savings, which is not always true. The tendency is to correct all evils and add a lot of things. The largest savings is in avoiding redundancy. We are already doing functional consolidation. In addition to cost savings, communities also want to improve services.
2. What are some potential obstacles? The largest is elected officials concern over loss of local autonomy and not having absolute control any longer. The next is employees, but consolidation can be approached without allowing employees to lose jobs. Another is lack of communication which allows rumors to spread. For this reason, he suggests every department be represented at the next ad hoc committee meeting so they don't hear what's happening from the press. Also, the more communities included, the more difficult the consolidation becomes. Other communities might take a look and decide to come in later, but he wouldn't recommend going out and seeking others.
3. We are willing to look at everything, but is it easier if we look at one department at a time? Normally yes.
4. How does a consolidation work? When communities go together on a service, they develop an oversight board which is responsible to the Village Boards, but each community still raises its own taxes. Even if a Fire Protection District is formed, it cannot tax separately. The oversight board has the power that the Village Boards give it, but usually is responsible for operations while the Village Boards set policy. The oversight board is usually made up of an

administrator, a current member of each Board and a citizen at large from each community, all of whom are appointed to staggered terms. McGrath sometimes suggest the oversight board be given a new name to send a signal that business as usual has changed and so that there's no arguing over which community's name goes first.

5. How would McGrath approach a consolidation? He brings in people with expertise in the service area to do an audit. If we do several departments, he addresses them all at once. He recommends we start with one that will probably have the greatest success because all other departments will watch this one. He would develop a list of what we're looking for and then gather information from departments—size, service load, number of employees.
6. Do any departments have better success than others? What creates success is the culture. If the rank and file are not fearful or opposed, it's easier. He listens for a common thread when he talks to Village Board Presidents down to the person who's doing the job. He may talk to people individually or in small groups.
7. Is Fire and EMS a good place to start both because of cost and also because they're volunteers? If either department is a private corporation, it takes a little more work. Some committee members think the committee should rate all departments in order of least resistance. Others think the consultant should look at all information and rate what would be easiest to do first down to what would be hardest. The committee would then determine whether to look at all at once or a few and choose the ones to look at.
8. Is it difficult to consolidate when you have two very different tax bases? Usually there are three components in a consolidation—population, amount of activity and equalized assessed valuation. Usually there is not an equal say between the two communities. He also looks at capital budgets differently than operational budgets.
9. Are there substantial legal hurdles? All legal issues are usually outside of an RFP submitted by the consultant because it's such an unknown. McGrath uses a Milwaukee firm. We could use our local attorney if he's willing.

The next meeting will be January 15th at 1:00 at the Fontana Village Hall. The Fontana representatives will contact their department heads and Long will contact Walworth's. Genoa City and Bloomfield just did a consolidation on their own. Their Fire Chief is willing to come here and share. Long will see if he's available on the 15th.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Schut,
Clerk