

## BROOKLYN FIRE & EMS DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES 08/11/2021

Meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by President Mark O'Brien. Members present were Kim Gruebling, Jim Lunde and Mike Brusberg. John Marx was present via online video conference. Also present were Mason Barber and Justin Wicik. Sarah Andrisevic was present via online video conference.

Motion: Brusberg/Lunde to approve minutes of 6/16/2021 and 6/27/2021 meetings as written. Motion carried.

Sue Williams, a supervisor for the Town of Rutland addressed the board on several aspects regarding the strategic plan results: external responses indicated a desire to see more funding for the fire department and an increase in staff. Internal responses indicated base pay was not adequate and recruiting is not a priority and state training requirements are viewed as discouraging for new members and there are no standards for probationary firefighters and no annual performance reviews. She had several questions for the board about the full time fire chief position: 1. How will giving this one person a full time position from being a part time position and the money needed to pay the full time chief, how will that address the issues of not enough staff and the fact that the current pay does not appear to be adequate by internal staff. There would be a savings of \$29,000, what will happen with that money? Is it the intention to use the money to help create increases in staff or just an explanation on what will happen to that money? 2. Brooklyn is one of the smallest districts in the state. Has there ever been a discussion on a merger with another municipality, such as Oregon or Stoughton. Even with the merger, the fire and EMS will continue to have separate budgets, why that is, especially since its stressed the departments should be seen as one. 3. How many staffers are considered daytime staffers? The report indicated that the full time fire chief would supervise these people, does that mean they are currently not supervised. And if they are, who is supervising them currently? Do the current call volumes justify needing a second full time staffer on days, the full time chief or does the data indicate more staff on other shifts. If the full time fire chief position fails, has the department considered offering incentives for recruitment and or longevity pay for retaining employees? Strategic plan indicated the fire department has seen a drop in calls in 2020 as compared to 2019, why is there a justification for making the chief a full time position. O'Brien commented on the recruitment question that the department has tried everything under the sun to get new people in, but with the state requirements for EMTs and firefighters, it is a very dedicated job and no one wants to put in the time anymore. He also said there is no supervision during the day and the full time chief would supervisor here that could run on EMS or fire. The paperwork for the departments is time consuming and he doesn't expect anyone to be here 2 – 3 nights a week and weekends to do that work when people have families and other responsibilities. A fulltime chief would relieve that issue and would give us another EMT/fire person here being cross trained. EMS Director Wicik commented during the day there is typically 1 or 2 LTE EMTs on shift at the station. The direct supervisor is the assistant EMS Director, but we are all volunteers at this point. The LTEs have assigned duties with check off sheets, but no one is there during the day to supervise, other than them stopping in or being available by phone after their regular work day. Sue Williams asked if there has been any discussion to use that money to help with the inadequate pay. EMS Director Wicik comment the money savings would come from the full time person would be coming some of the hours that are covered by the LTEs right now. Currently there are 13 officer positions and with a full time chief, there would be only 9 officers. Sue Williams commented there is clearly an issue with retention; the department loses people because the pay is fairly low and they are going to places where the pay is better, could the money be redirected to helping address those issues that were stated in the strategic plan? EMS Director Wicik commented on the issue with

retention during the day in the village, some communities such as Belleville, Oregon, and Evansville, Evansville alone has half a dozen firefighters that work for the city of Evansville and are allowed to leave during the day if a call comes in. In Brooklyn, there are not enough economy/jobs during the day; we don't have enough people around because everyone leaves. With the LTEs we have now during the day, 3 of them live down by Monroe and they come up here to commute. With them being in house, it does improve our transport time getting out the door. If we don't have those LTE hours, there is usually no one in the district that can cover during the day. Sue Williams commented how are you going to address the issue of inadequate pay in your 2022 budget, is there a way to provide increases or incentives to the volunteers so we have more volunteers or get more volunteers or something so you don't have the retention issues that appear to be the problem or the problem with recruitment. She also commented she's hearing an argument for getting a full time fire chief and there's an argument for leaving the chief a part time and moving that money toward increasing the salaries of the current paid employees. EMS Director Wicik commented there is a new line on the 2022 budget for recruitment and public education. He is trying to improve that to be more consistent to get people educated and more people recruited. They are trying to be more visible in the community. He did have someone reach out that saw them at the national night out that is interested in joining. For EMTS, the minimum to be able to run on an ambulance is a 196 hour course. Some people start that class and realize how demanding it is and then they back out. Fire is similar with their classes, just to get the minimum fire qualifications is 200 hours as well. Sometime people don't realize the commitment until they have to take it. Sue Williams asked to meet with EMS Director Wicik to talk one on one to go over more questions.

Deana Zentner commented on why there wasn't an assessment of the Wisconsin policy form presentation that regards shared services and consolidations. That's something that the whole state of Wisconsin is looking at and has numerous reports and studies and thinks that should be explored. For example, when you're talking about recruitment and retention, that is a state wide issue, there are state funding incentives right now that she has learned about through the Oregon Area Fire/EMS District. And she sees that there is a steady flow of applicants, they don't have a problem with recruiting. She thinks it is unfortunate and unfair that the shared services and consolidation wasn't explored more, it doesn't seem like it was even touched on. And it terms of the budget, she heard from last year there is a fund balance of nearly \$300,000 and wondering what that is earmarked for and it seems with all the problems discussed, more focus is needed on the boots on the ground people, fill the gap there. She would also like to meet with the EMS Director to go over some questions. She commented that their board needs to be informed and they are not. She asked about coming to the town of Rutland's board meeting in September to go over questions. EMS Director Wicik will see if it lines up with his schedule to attend that meeting. She commented the town of Rutland is uninformed and has not been getting information.

John Marx commented the strategic plan committee met the previous night and approved the strategic plan. He reminded the board it was the result of a year and a half of discussion, with input from anyone who chose to come by and participate. There was considerable input and discussion from representatives of the town of Rutland. It surprises him to hear they are completely uninformed. He is willing to meet with anyone from the board on their schedule, he understands someone coming on the board in April hasn't had a chance to catch up with everything we've done, but it's August and they've been working on it for months. Deana Zentner commented the town of Rutland has to have representation, minutes sent to them, and they don't. There is a complete disconnection. O'Brien commented the district secretary/treasurer sends all the minutes to the clerks of each municipality. Marx emphasized adopting the strategic plan does not obligate the commission to do anything in that plan, just makes recommendations, and sets goals and strategies moving forward.

Motion: Marx/Gruebling to accept and approve the strategic plan for 2022 thru 2027. Motion carried.

Chief Barber reported the department responded to 14 calls during June and 11 during July. They are 3 calls ahead of 2020 as of August 1<sup>st</sup>. There were 1 mutual aid call and they continue to be the larger calls. They continue to monitor the guidance from the CDC, Dane, Green, and Rock counties in regard to the rising covid positivity rates. We have recently ordered more masks, in preparation for a continued need. They continue to use mask on calls. Old car 1, the 1994 chevy suburban, is currently on auction at WI Surplus and the bidding is at \$3,100. The gator and trailer should be up for auction next week. New car 1 is being worked on, getting the lights changed out.

Chief Barber went over the proposed changes to the 2022 budget. He added some more budget line items so things are clearer for everyone. Money from equipment, new was moved into two new budget lines: turnout gear and uniforms. The goal of the district board is to bring on a full time chief; the fire portion of the salary is \$33,226. The cost is offset by the reduction of officers totaling \$11,400 and some work reassignment from salaries totaling \$8,750. The training budget is being reduced because of class availability reduced during covid. Brusberg asked why the current year salary line is zero. Chief Barber commented the fire department gets paid once a year in December.

Motion: Lunde/Gruebling to approve the fire budget. Motion carried

EMS Director Wicik reported the department had 22 runs during July and so far 19 during August. Total out of service hours YTD are 174.

Lunde asked if the biggest differences in the 2022 EMS budget were in wages/benefits. EMS Director Wicik commented yes. He went over the proposed changes to the 2022 budget. Medical supplies disposable and non-disposable have been increased a little bit, due to price increases. Pager/Radio replacement line item increased by \$1,000. He added a new line item for a EMS scheduling software to help with scheduling and keeping track of personnel information at a cost of \$3,000 per year. The EMS portion of the fire chief's salary is \$49,840. The cost is offset by a reduction in officer totaling \$10,000 and some reallocation of part-time staff hours totaling \$15,999.80. The volunteer salary line item increased \$9,144, due to an increase in the hourly rate from \$2 to \$3 per hour and a \$5 per call increase in the run stipend, \$20 per call. There is a new line item for public education/recruitment. He used a call average of 250 per year to calculate the numbers. Right now, the department is averaging 22-23 calls per month. During covid, the call volume picked up. Gruebling recommended keeping the per capita the same as last year by using \$39,490.25 of the surplus money EMS has. Marx commented the town of Brooklyn may want to save the surplus money to go towards a new ambulance in a few years. Brusberg commented is there a way to be more aggressive on the collections. Gruebling commented he doesn't want to raise taxes when there is an almost \$300,000 surplus for EMS.

Motion: Gruebling/Lunde to stay at the \$59.64 per captia for the 2022 EMS budget. Marx abstained. Motion carried.

Marx commented he has not looked more into charging fees for fire calls. He has not reached out to an attorney yet, is going to try the department of revenue first. He is trying to figure out whether the fire district can send out a bill for calls independent of the municipalities. He needs more time to look into it.

Motion: Lunde/Brusberg to table vote on charging a fee for fire calls for a couple of months. Motion carried.

Marx comment the ARPA funds available to the municipalities do provide for retrospective premium pay for people who have been in hazardous situations due to covid. He is waiting on detailed guidance on what that really means. He is being cautious there because in 2020 the state said they would reimburse hazard pay and the district barely got any money back for the hazard pay paid out. Gruebling commented to bring it up at the joint meeting to see if the municipalities want to use some of their ARPA funds towards the hazard pay already paid out. Brusberg commented the village is having a joint finance and public works meeting to go over use of the funds.

Motion: Lunde/Brusberg put discussion of using ARPA funds towards hazard pay on agenda for joint municipality meeting. Motion carried.

The district secretary commented EMS has \$257,000 of unallocated funds at the end of 2020, 2019 had unallocated funds of \$290,000. July financials were handed out. We added car 1 – the explorer which is in the fixed assets on the balance sheet. On the fire income statement, the gain on sale for \$7,700, are the proceeds from old engine #2. We have received some 2% dues money from 3 of the municipalities.

There was discussion on when to have the next district meeting and the joint meeting. Brusberg commented if the district should have our meeting a week before the joint meeting and dedicate a portion of the agenda for Q&A, so the municipalities can get any questioned answered. Gruebling commented they should set the agenda for the joint meeting at the next district meeting.

Next district meeting will be September 15, 2021.

The joint municipality meeting will be Thursday September 23, 2021.

Marx commented if they do want to implement the strategic plan, there are changes to the district agreement that will need to be made to accomplish that. He will bring those forward to the meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Those are changes the district commission can make, but they ultimately need to be signed by all 5 municipalities. But it's not something that needs to be done at the joint meeting.

Motion: Lunde/Gruebling to adjourn at 8:31 pm. Motion carried.