

Rural Fire Association  
June 22, 2021

President Willard called the special meeting of the Rural Fire Association to order at 7:00 p.m. at the West Side Fire Station.

Present: Dave Roberts, Bob Starkweather, Steve Willard, Deborah Granger, Acting Chief Tyger Fullerton.

Absent: Don Stall.

Also Present: Brookfield Twp. Supervisor Nolan Spotts, City Manager Lapere, and several volunteer firefighters.

Roberts moved to approve the agenda as presented. Second, Starkweather. All yes. 0 No. Motion carried.

There was no public comment.

Granger moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve as presented. Second, Roberts. Roll Call vote. 4 yes. 0 No. Motion carried.

Treasurer's report. There is currently \$13,814.91 in checking. Granger presented an invoice from Foster Swift in the amount of \$627.

Willard moved to approve payment of the invoice. Second, Starkweather. Roll call vote. 4 yes. 0 No. Motion carried.

Roberts moved to approve the Treasurers report. Second, Willard. All yes. 0 No. Motion carried.

Fullerton reviewed the settlement process. There were 733 runs, 485 were city runs and 240 were township runs. The township share of the budget is 34% this year. The townships split up their share based on the number of billable runs in each township.

City Manager Lapere stated that the amount billed to the townships does not include Capital Repayment or ambulance costs.

Willard noted that the contract has conflicting language, one paragraph states we will be billed actual costs and another indicates budgeted costs.

Roberts questioned what happens if there are excess funds from the townships because actual costs were less than budgeted.

Lapere stated that now the Fire Budget is on it's own and no longer part of General Fund, the surplus would be credited to the Fire Budget.

Granger reported that Brookfield Twp Board approved paying the Townships fair share, with reservations with some of the line items increases.

Roberts reported that Eaton Township has the opinion that there should be no money spent on a pickup Spotts agreed that there should be no vehicles purchased this year.

Starkweather reported that his Board made no decision. They need more information and until actual costs are presented, they are reluctant. Walton Twp. was a little disturbed that the City approved a Special Assessment without public approval.

Roberts indicated that Eaton Township feels there is too much money budgeted for computers, phones, and other IT.

LaPere stated that the IT costs include more than computers. It includes software, phones, weather channel, etc. She stated that IT services will be bid out, but she can get the detailed costs for the Fire Dept.

Roberts stated that he wants to see an updated Revenue and expense report that show actual funds for the year.

Willard stated that Carmel Twp is not in favor of purchasing any vehicles at this time.

LaPere asked for a better description of what the Rural Fire Assn. needs in the way of information.

Roberts would like to see actual costs for everything including unemployment and other benefits.

Willard stated that there is a 42.9% difference from last year and does not agree with the budget.

Discussed hydrant rental. Roberts said he checked on the hydrant at Eaton Green and thought the department could use it.

Fullerton explained that they have no flow tests or any other information on that hydrant and they would be afraid to use it for fear we damage their system or our equipment. Fullerton explained how the tankers are hooked up for pumping at a fire scene.

Starkweather stated that he would like to see financial information on all the lines and anything removed that is not Rural Fire share.

Roberts moved that everything on the budget table be justified. Second, Starkweather. All yes. 0 No. Motion carried.

LaPere stated that she should have actual revenue and expense figures by the end of July for the association.

Willard brought up the MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) for discussion.

LaPere noted that the City Council would have to pass a resolution so there will need to be discussion with the Council.

Fullerton explained that the Fire Department researched MABAS in 2009 and determined at that time not to get involved. He explained that MABAS is for big disasters, going well beyond our borders, that

would require equipment and manpower be sent to other areas, such as Detroit, the UP or even Chicago. The Department felt that our resources should remain local as the volunteers don't want to be sent to other locations. They prefer to keep our area covered and we do have automatic mutual aid within the county's fire departments.

Starkweather stated that Walton Twp has new board members who are on the fence regarding the Fire Agreement. He is gathering information to take back to them. Walton Twp would be paying more for Charlotte for only 11% of the township. It is all about the money and no concerns with how the Fire Dept operates or the service they provide.

Starkweather moved to table MABAS discussion. Second, Roberts. All yes. 0 No.

Spotts stated that no one has any problems with the Fire Dept., they do a great job. He doesn't understand why the cost is so high.

Starkweather stated that he thinks his board will hang in there after getting all of the information, but can't guarantee.

Fullerton noted that the volunteers need good equipment and appreciation for what they do.

Willard reported that he did get a reply from the City regarding the FOIA request for vehicle titles and invoices that were available and he has forwarded that to the auditors.

Roberts questioned who owns the equipment on the trucks and does that need to be included in our audit for depreciation?

City Manager LaPere will check and report back.

Starkweather reported that the Fire Chief selection committee is to meet on June 29<sup>th</sup>. They have 8 candidates to consider.

Willard stated that Chester Twp is considering withdrawing from the RFA and have requested input from three other departments. We will need to determine the actual value of the depreciated equipment if the township has to be reimbursed. It will require a letter from Chester Twp but this needs to be considered. Chester has not validated the contract.

Flat line payment for equipment. Board members discussed contributing an annual fee to be determined that will allow the purchase of trucks when needed. This could level out the cost of a major purchase over the years and funds would be available. Board members will take this back to their townships.

Roberts stated that he would like estimates for a new mini pumper to know what to plan for.

City Manager LaPere stated that she will get prices from around the state and report back.

The minutes of the RFA meetings are going to have to be posted and a notice in the paper of where they are available. The townships can put the minutes on their website or have available copies for the public.

Willard questioned if the volunteers are going to leave the department, he has heard rumors.

Fullerton reported that some of the older volunteers have quit coming, except for big runs, but the younger volunteers are committed to staying. They would just like to put politics and misunderstandings aside.

City Manager LaPere stated she will have final financial statement available in July and we can schedule another meeting.

Public Comment.

Corey Sanders, Asst. Chief, stated that this past year has not been easy for the volunteers. There is a disconnect between the City, RFA and the volunteers that we need to fix. The volunteers don't want more money, they need good equipment so they can do their job safely and efficiently. The department has kept trucks running beyond the time that they are safe and dependable. The pickup they want to replace has serious issues and it is used daily for all medical, grass fires and all other runs. Corey stated that any time a RFA members wants to know about vehicles or any other issue, the Fire Department welcomes those questions.

Roberts stated that we do want them to have good equipment, but we need to be sure the City can pay their share. With the special assessment in place, it appears that the City can raise the money needed. We just need time to get all the information from the City for us to be confident in that.

Capt. Daley suggested that an RFA member should go to Chester Board and encourage them to stay with the RFA.

Several volunteers spoke about the need for new vehicles, thanked the board for dropping MABAS, explained that water for rural fires is drawn from the City fire hydrants, and the need to communicate better. We need to keep comradery there and work together.

Roberts moved to adjourn. Second, Starkweather. Meeting adjourned at 9:17 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L Granger  
Secretary/Treasurer