

Wednesday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Meeting called to order by Aimee Newbauer at 7:00 p.m.

Members present on roll call: Jena Paquette, Aimee Newbauer, Len Manning  
Others Present: Jim Duncan, Alec Adams, Jeff Traynor, Don Ellefson, Kerry Bryan, Mike Dorsey, Andy Chartrand, Luke Maier, Marc Ince, Gary Hines.

Public comments: Mike Dorsey was in attendance representing the St. Croix Falls Fire Department. Mr. Dorsey noted as the municipalities look at joint coverage options moving forward, St. Croix Falls Fire Department would be interested in covering areas of Balsam Lake Township from 120<sup>th</sup> to 150<sup>th</sup> street respectively for \$2,000.00 per square mile annually.

Discussion and possible action regarding joint Fire Department trainings in 2024. Jim Duncan asked Gary Hines if Balsam Lake Fire Department would be open to doing joint training nights with Apple River Fire Department. Gary Hines stated the department has always been open to doing joint trainings with other fire departments. Mr. Hines thinks it's a good idea as it's a good way for members to get their training hours in. Apple River Fire Department (ARFD), Fire Chief Alec Adams also stated that there are cross training opportunities both departments could benefit from. Alec Adams stated it would be nice for each department to know how to operate equipment from both department in the future. Alec Adams also stated the ARFD has a yearly training schedule. No formal motion was made by the committee however, Alec Adams will contact Mark Anderson, the fire chief for the Balsam Lake Fire Department regarding cross training opportunities moving forward.

Discussion and possible action regarding payment support to Apple River Township for ARFD 2023 & 2024 Fire & EMS support. At the public protection committee meeting in November, discussions regarding payment support for 2023 took place. From that meeting it was the understanding that Alec Adams would communicate with Apple River Township regarding the payment support offer from Balsam Lake of \$300.00 per call. This would cost the Village of Balsam Lake an estimated \$7,500.00. Kerry Bryan, township chair of Apple River Township was in attendance. Mr. Bryan stated the Township of Apple River verified the offered payment support for 2023 was acceptable. Alec Adams will contact Mark Anderson to confirm the total number of ARFD supported calls for service in 2023 and report back to the public protection committee. Mr. Bryan had questions regarding the 2024 payment support if calls for service would be just Fire or both Fire and EMS. Alec Adams would be supportive of both Fire and EMS support for 2024 but it would be helpful if Polk County Dispatch would page Balsam Lake Fire Department first for EMS and then do a delayed page for Apple River Fire Department to assist. The Public Protection Committee noted they would talk with the Balsam Lake Fire Chief, Mark Anderson to verify if 2024 support will be Fire support or both Fire and EMS support moving forward.

Concerns relating to how Fire and EMS are called for service at the county level was of great discussion. It was noted that the Polk County Dispatch center has technology that is being underutilized. All were in agreement if changes were made to how Fire and EMS are paged through dispatch it could build efficiency throughout the entire county. Jim Duncan will contact the Polk County Sheriff to further discuss this concern and if warranted will attend a Polk County Public Protection Committee meeting. He will keep everyone informed through the discussions. Mike Dosey also stated he would be willing to assist Jim Duncan in this effort.

Both ARFD and Balsam Lake Fire Department utilize the lamResponding platform. Through discussion it was stated that volunteers could utilize this platform to access both Fire Department calls for service. Alec Adams will connect with Mark Anderson to see if they can access each departments lamResponding call lines.

No formal action was made.

Discussion and possible action regarding combining Fire Departments. Jim Duncan opened the discussion to see if this could be a possibility of combining ARFD and BLFD would be a possibility. Kerry Bryan stated that the Township of Apple River would need to review more financial data from the Balsam Lake Fire Department before entertaining the idea. Kerry Bryan stated the budget that was given to them was unclear on how much the Village of Balsam Lake allots for the Fire Department. Jim Duncan stated Alec Adams gave the Public Protection Committee the ARFD budget. Jim Duncan also stated that for the next meeting the Village will provide an updated chart of accounts illustrating the budgeted amount for the Fire Department and showing what the Fire Protection is for Balsam Lake Township. Kerry Bryan also would like an update on the overall health of the Department in terms off two years of data for calls for service, how the department is operating, how many members the department has and a list of equipment inventory.

Questions regarding how the department would be structured were entertained. Two options were discussed. The first option was a contracted agreement and the second option discussed was more of an association approach. Currently Georgetown Township has a contract agreement and pays Apple River Township for Fire and EMS support. This contract is a five-year contract and the cost for service has not changed. This agreement does have an exit clause. This contract is calculated per section ARFD covers and not by the mill rate calculations. Georgetown Township also contracts Fire and EMS support with the Milltown Fire Department. Marc Ince noted that Milltown Fire Department recently worked through establishing an association, thus they might have a template or other supportive insight that might help this group develop an association. LSU is also a merged ambulance service and could be a resource moving forward.

There were questions regarding if creating an association who would own the equipment. Jim Duncan noted the Balsam Lake and Centuria Police Departments merged. Through creating the Balsam Lake Centuria Police Department the equipment became ownership of the department. Jim Duncan also shared that through merging department, sales of the vehicles go back to the Police Department and new

equipment purchased are also the Police Departments. Both municipalities share the same attorney so working through developing an agreement was very positive. The Police Department is governed by 5 commissioners. Two commissioners are Village Board Members from Balsam Lake, two commissioners are Village of Centuria Board Members and there is one commissioner at an at large position meaning they are a member of the community appointed by the commission. Within the agreement, it states the agreement is reviewable every three years allowing both municipalities to withdraw from the joint department as well as a section for division off assets section, if there were fundamental concerns. Currently this agreement has been very positive and has supported the residents within both communities.

Jim Duncan also noted he reached out to Gae Magnafici who is currently serving as the Wisconsin State Assembly representative for Polk County and part of St. Croix County. Jim shared that there could be funds available to communities who join services. More information will be available at the next meeting.

It was noted that as continued discussions regarding merging services for Fire and EMS continue, each municipality would need to pass a resolution to form a policy that meets each communities needs.

No formal action was taken.

Discussion and possible action to appoint members from each municipality to an ad-hoc committee. The overall consciences is as followed: two representatives from the Apple River Township board shall be appointed, two representatives from the Village of Balsam Lake board shall be appointed, one member from Georgetown Township shall be appointed and one member of Balsam Lake Township shall be appointed to this Ad-Hoc Committee. Each community will reach out the Village of Balsam Lake to confirm who will be on the Ad-Hoc Committee.

**Motion by Jena Paquette to adjourn. Seconded by Len Manning. All in Favor. Carried. 8:06 p.m.**

Unapproved Minutes

Amy VanDeBrake, Clerk Treasurer