



TOWN OF EAGLE TOWN BOARD  
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING  
REGARDING POSSIBLE CONSOLIDATION WITH THE  
VILLAGE OF NORTH PRAIRIE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
Tuesday, July 1, 2014  
Approved Minutes

Chairman Kwiatkowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Present: Chairman Kwiatkowski; Supervisors Davis, Rasmussen and West. Supervisor Malek was absent. Also present: Town Clerk Pepper, town Treasurer Pasterski, Fire Chief Heim and Fire Captain Kugel.

Possibility of Consolidation with the Village of North Prairie Fire Department - Fire Chief Heim explained that discussions between the Eagle Fire Department and the Village of North Prairie Fire Department have been going on for the past six (6) to eight (8) months. Chief Heim reported that the Eagle Fire Department was founded in 1927 when the community saw a need for effective fire protection. In the late 1970's, the Emergency Medical Service was added. Chief Heim explained that the department used to be 100% volunteer. Department like Eagle have relied on volunteers, which are harder and harder to come by these days. Departments however still have a responsibility to provide effective coverage.

Chief Heim explained that within the last year the Village of North Prairie reached out to neighboring municipalities, asking if there would be interest in discussing possible consolidation of departments. Meetings were held to discuss consolidation conceptually. It was found that the Town and Village of Eagle conduct business different than the Town and Village of Mukwonago. As a result, the Town and Village of Mukwonago dropped out of the discussions. Fire Chief Heim explained that the Village of North Prairie is in a predicament. The department has historically been servicing the Town of Ottawa, the Town of Genesee, and a small portion of Mukwonago. The Village of North Prairie has been informed that the Town of Ottawa and the Town of Genesee will not need their service beginning in 2015. The Village of North Prairie continues to want to be sure that their department remains effective.

Fire Chief Heim compared the population and assessed valuation between the Town of Eagle, the Village of Eagle and the Village of North Prairie. Chief Heim referred to the comparison of the number of staff, the number of calls for service, and the number and age of apparatus. Chief Heim explained that the committee has been working to identify efficiencies and inefficiencies in operations. Both departments operations are very similar in structure and order. Both departments operate at the Advanced Emergency Medical Technician level and provide direct 911 responses to residents in the community. Both departments have mutual aid agreements in place if either department is unable to fulfill a call for service. Both departments actualize revenue from the EMS system though Eagle and North Prairie utilize the revenues differently. The revenue generated in Eagle stays within the fire district to offset the EMS program so that no tax dollars are expended for EMS. North Prairie's revenue is deposited into the general fund. Both departments' staff similarly with North Prairie providing 8 hours of part time coverage

per day with off hours augmented by the highly dedicated and trained paid on call staff. Eagle staffs for 12 hours a day and relies on its highly dedicated and trained paid on call staff for supplemental coverage. Neither department staffs 24-hours per day with in-station coverage.

In regards to benefits for consolidation, Chief Heim identified the following potential benefits: 1) long term capital savings on equipment; 2) reduction of heavy equipment needs; 3) possible better insurance rating from Insurance Services Office (ISO); 4) quicker delivery of service from satellite station to portions of the Town of Eagle; and 5) multiple on-duty crews for nighttime coverage of all communities. Chief Heim explained that if the departments were to consolidate, the stations could have joint equipment between the different stations. Chief Heim explained that the current ISO for the Village of Eagle is 5; the Town is rated 9 due to no fire hydrants. Consolidating can lower the rate because of shared services. For example, the Village of North Prairie has a big ladder truck that Eagle does not have. Having the joint equipment allows businesses and residents to reduce their insurance costs. Chief Heim explained that consolidating would allow better coverage for residents who live on Ulrickson Road and Piper Road. Chief Heim explained that both departments propose to have on-duty night crews. Consolidating would create efficiencies, such as when one station is already responding to a call, the other station could respond to another call. In addition, there is also a possibility of retaining revenue by not using outside resources.

Chief Heim reported that he and the Town Treasurer approximated the fire cost by assessed valuation. Actual town taxes was \$23.64 per \$100,000 of assessed value. In regards to the budget, the Boards have the final authority over expenditures. Another cost saving would be that the consolidated departments would operate with one (1) full-time employee, specifically the Fire Chief.

Chief Heim explained that for the past eight (8) months, he and Fire Chief Taylor have been working to identify possible efficiencies. Operationally, the departments could mesh their cultures easily.

Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that the Eagle Fire Department has been setting aside monies in the ambo fund for a new ambulance. The fund already has enough money to purchase one outright. Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that \$60,000 of ambulance revenue each year is used to offset the cost of paid-on-call. No tax dollars are used to fund the ambulance.

Town resident Peter Jensen, W345 S10489 CTH E stated that he supports the basic concept of consolidation but he has some concerns. First, how would the consolidated department be governed? Seeing that the Town would fund the largest portion of the department, it would make sense that the Town's vote would be proportional. Mr. Jensen stated that another concern is finances. Whatever system is designed, there has to be parity. Should the Village of North Prairie need to purchase an ambulance, they should have their money in-hand, just as Eagle has. In regards to the individual stations, Mr. Jensen suggested that each community be responsible for their own maintenance issues. Mr. Jensen questioned staff parity. He explained he agrees that volunteerism is declining but how many volunteers live in North Prairie and how are we to know whether or not they will stay on if the departments consolidate. Another concern would be to have an agreement in place should the consolidation dissolve. Mr. Jensen suggested that parity should be set somewhere between three (3) to five (5) years.

Chief Heim explained that in regards to capital expenditures, North Prairie has some issues with their fire station that need to be addressed. The Eagle Fire Department building will be needing a new roof and now a new septic system.

In regards to capital expenditures, Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that the building itself is owned 50/50 between the Town and Village of Eagle. The equipment is owned by equalized value.

Mr. Nick Wambach, W344 S10609 Island View Lane concurred with Mr. Jensen on his list of concerns. In response to Mr. Wambach, Chief Heim stated that residents do not likely get a break on insurance ratings for residing on the lake. Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that response distance has an impact on the insurance rating. Chief Heim stated that living within 1000 feet of a hydrant will also lower the insurance rating.

Mr. Wambach expressed concern that the North Prairie Fire Department revenue is not separated like it is in Eagle. North Prairie needs to set aside monies, like Eagle. Also, Mr. Wambach stated that North Prairie ambulance fees are lower than Eagle's.

Chief Heim explained that North Prairie has begun keeping department revenues separate from the general fund. The committee discussed retaining the Fire Commission. It was agreed that ambo funds need to stay with their respective department. Chief Heim explained that North Prairie has and will take all comments under advisement.

Discussion ensued regarding what the "new board" would be comprised of.

Village of North Prairie President Debbie Hall explained that their department's budget was \$95,000. A portion of that was allocated to service portions of neighboring municipalities. President Hall explained that the portion for the Town of Mukwonago is under contract until 2015. President Hall stated that the bottom line is that the community wants to have a say over their services.

Mr. Tom Day, W350 S10115 Highview Road stated that there are twenty-four staff members servicing a combined population of roughly 5,500 in Eagle; North Prairie's staffing ratio is lower. Chief Heim added that the North Prairie numbers includes Ottawa and Genesee. Mr. Day discussed North Prairie's general fund and the thought that it would need to be changed if the departments consolidate. Chief Heim reported that North Prairie realizes that parity is a source of contention and needs to be negotiated. All three (3) boards need to meet to discuss the idiosyncrasies. Mr. Day explained that he would be in favor of consolidation as long as everything were equal before consolidation.

Village of Eagle President Rich Spurrell reported that the Village held their informational meeting with very few in attendance. The same concerns were raised and there were no objections to moving forward with the process.

Mr. Wambach suggested developing a five (5) year budget so the departments can see something long-term. Chief Heim added that staffing issues should also be addressed long-term.

In response to Pam Meyer, S101 W34849 CTH LO, Chief Heim stated that capital improvements are included in their operations budget. Chief Heim explained that the department got a new \$579,000 engine in 2008, by way of a five (5) year lease. There are sufficient cash funds for capital replacements. Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that ambo monies are set aside, monies are also set aside for equipment and capital equipment. If the Eagle Fire Department would need a new fire truck, the department could use capital monies and then take out loans for the balance. Chairman Kwiatkowski stated that the department does have mutual aid. When a particular piece of equipment is needed to respond to an emergency, we can always call for mutual aid, and other departments can call us for mutual aid.

Mr. Bill Koch, S101 W34571 CTH LO questioned the proposed equalized valuation split between the municipalities. Village of Eagle President Spurrell explained that the Village of North Prairie residents' taxes accounted for \$40,000 of the department's budget. Village of North Prairie President Hall explained that a certain amount of money is allocated for the fire department operations. Other revenues come from

different sources. The department will now be losing revenue and will also be losing ambulance revenue. The department will need approximately \$200,000 to service themselves.

Village of North Prairie President Hall stated that all of the concerns have been raised already. The departments are trying to find a solution that would be a benefit for everybody. President Hall explained that North Prairie is in favor of having a Fire Commission. The mindset of the boards now is to do what is best for the residents.

Discussion ensued regarding needs for equipment, equipment sharing, and the ability to downsize the fleet.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to call for mutual aid and the possibility of not needing mutual aid if the departments consolidated. Discussion followed.

In response to Ms. Meyer, Chief Heim confirmed that Eagle and North Prairie currently use Waukesha County Dispatch.

In response to Supervisor West, Chief Heim explained that the proposal is to staff the stations as they are being staffed now with part-time employees during the day and volunteer/paid-on-call staff at night. Currently, Eagle has one (1) volunteer to respond during the day; North Prairie has three (3) or four (4). The department uses the two in, two out rule. Two responders are ready to go; two come in for back-up.

In response to Supervisor West, Chief Heim explained that the Eagle building is in need of a new roof and a new septic system which North Prairie should not have to fund.

Village of North Prairie President Hall suggested that costs be proportionate rather than by equalized value. It needs to be fair. Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that in order for progress to be made, costs need to be determined. Another consideration is when it is anticipated that the departments would need to be staffed full-time. Chairman Kwiatkowski explained that the funding of the fire department is second only to funding road improvements.

Village of North Prairie President Hall explained that they held their own public hearing to obtain input from their residents. The residents were advised of their three (3) options. First, to have a stand-alone department. Second, to consolidate. Third, to contract out for services. As it stands now, the department has enough money to operate for another year or two (2) but this is not a long-term option. Once numbers are determined, they would like to hold another public hearing for resident input.

Ms. Meyer stated that equalized value is typical when dividing a business. Chief Heim concurred that assessed valuation is typical. Town Treasurer Pasterski added that equalized value is set for fairness. Schools are determined by equalized value. On manufacturing facilities, the state determines the value on equalized values.

Chief Heim and the Town Board thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

A motion was made by Chairman Kwiatkowski, seconded by Supervisor Davis to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 P.M. Upon voice vote, motion carried.

