

WESTFIELD FIRE AND RESCUE DISTRICT

Special-Joint Work Session

Minutes

October 2, 2014 @ 7:00 pm

Trustee Likley called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call; Trustees Schmidt, Thombs, Likley present.

Self-introductions were made with the following present;

<u>Harrisville Twp.</u>	<u>Chatham Twp.</u>	<u>Westfield Fire and Rescue</u>
Tom Packard	Chief William Disbrow	Chief Richard Fletcher
Joe Remington		

<u>Lafayette Twp.</u>	<u>Canaan Twp.</u>	<u>Guilford Twp.</u>
Mike Costello	Jeff Coffey	Bob Rohrer
Chief Jeff Hall	Chief Brandon Smith	Chief Jerry Winkler

Town and Country Fire District

Bill Cletzer
Chief Bob Wright

County Prosecutors Office

David Folk

Trustee Likley stated, this meeting has been properly noticed in the Gazette identifying all entities present as an open meeting and work session. Approved meeting minutes will be provided to all boards and an audio of this evening can also be provided if requested.

Purpose of work session

To gather and share information regarding the mutual aid and no response calls to the Lodi Fire and Rescue service area. The area covers Harrisville Township and the Village of Lodi. The delayed response to the residents is the first concern of our efforts. Lodi Fire does answer the greater portion of their calls, however, WFRD feels that a disproportionate amount of responsibility has been shifted to our members. This is not only a toll on them but also a financial cost to the operating budget of our district. This concern is not a deviation from our commitment to the contractual agreement of true mutual aid throughout this area and county. Like most departments we soft-bill residents and by option can hard-bill non-residents. Although the actual payments are a portion of actual billed and hard-billing is a percentage of that. This billing does supplement the operating budgets for all of us, but by no means does it provide the financial base of operations. That funding is the levies and contractual agreements that we have with and from our residents. The financial responsibility of those tax dollars falls on the trustees and council members to ensure the efficient use of those dollars. So while this meeting is called to discuss service response it is equally called to discuss the financial response to this issue as well.

It is our intent to provide an open, honest and respectful dialog for this purpose and with that I'll open the floor.

WESTFIELD FIRE AND RESCUE DISTRICT

Trustee Likley then stated that we had received an email from Mayor Giessman that Lodi Council members and he would not be attending this meeting this evening. This was very disappointing that they choose not to participate. Council President Melody Miller had called Mr. Likley requesting the opportunity to have joint work session to gain information from all of the surrounding communities. However, Harrisville Township Trustees are present this evening and they pay a portion of the operating budget of the Lodi department.

Trustee Likley stated that WFRD initiated the communication with Lodi and our concerns. Also communicated with the surround communities to establish this meeting tonight. Information was presented of run activity to the Lodi service area from 2011, 2012, 2013 and to date 2014. In 2011 Westfield Fire had 80 runs to the Lodi area, 2012 and 2013, 41 runs each year and to date 52 runs. This is not a new problem, as a similar meeting was held in 2011 with Lodi Village Council, Mayor and Harrisville Trustees.

Chief Disbrow;

Lodi Chief Ridenour contacted him asking if Chatham could help them out, looking for a quick answer for coverage. Disbrow responded that they would do whatever they can to help. Next thing he finds out (through newspaper article) that they're first out on mutual aid. His concern was their ability to respond as they don't have the day staffing or on call members. They're one of the last departments that don't pay their volunteers per run, they're all volunteer. They've had 4 calls which they were responding to and "called off", which is troublesome as well as their crews were up and in route. His concern is that they are not the answer to the issues in Lodi and if they can't respond to a call then there is the delay for Lafayette to be toned out and their response time.

Chief Fletcher; There appears to be some confusion in Lodi Department as to who they should call for mutual aid. A motor vehicle accident a couple weeks ago just outside of our area and instead of calling WFRD, the closest department, they called Town and Country. This is not providing the best response to that call as T&C is a further distance. It doesn't appear that they are addressing the problem, but shifting to another department. This is concerning to all of the Chiefs as this is not the responsive to the patient.

Likley; It appears that as a result of our pushback on this issue that they are calling on departments that are further away and going around Westfield at the potential cost to the resident. This is not the goal of our efforts, but to attempt to resolve the issue. Possible options could a contracted service with each of the surround departments, participate in the districts or per-call billing. We acknowledge that Westfield had staffing issues a few years back and Seville-Guilford was covering a lot of our calls. But we took the necessary steps to correct the problems.

Jeff Coffey; Was Canaan's Chief in the 80s and realized the needs of the department. He resigned in 1995 to be Trustee to work to provide the funding and man power to improve the department.

Mike Costello; Chief Hall along with the Trustees have been able to build the staffing to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, 6am to 6pm. The surrounding departments know our staffing level and know that we will answer a call wherever we're needed. But at the end of the day that crew is there for our residents.

Likley; asked Chief Disbrow and Chief Hall if anyone from Lodi had contacted them about moving them up on the MABAS list? Their response was they found out about that in the newspaper article.

WESTFIELD FIRE AND RESCUE DISTRICT

Chief Hall; A good practice that whenever there is a change of any type on that list, that you communicate out to all departments, so everyone is aware.

Bill Cletzer; we can all agree on a solution tonight but the missing piece is Lodi, there has to be a way legally to bring them to the table.

Chief Hall; asked if Lodi was billing patients for transport runs? Response was they believe that they had just started the process to implement billing.

Joe Remington; stated that the fire levy generates approximately \$100,000. annual and that levy include the residents of the Village.

Chief Fletcher; provided the following information; 44 total runs this year, 14 of which were no response, 16 where only one person from Lodi showed that equates to 30 of the 44 runs relied solely on Westfield. With an average delayed response time of 21 minutes. 14 were actual mutual aid to assist their department members either on fire our additional squad. Of the calls, 10 were on a Saturday or Sunday, 34 calls were Monday thru Friday with 20 of those calls being outside of the 8am to 4pm time frame.

Chief Smith; stated that they have had 20 runs to Lodi this year with approximately 2/3 in the evening and 1/2 of those with no response.

Chief Hall; has seen a slight increase this year over last.

Chief Wright; last year had 9 calls and this year to date 10, so they're seeing increase as well.

It also noted that all of the departments are approximately 6 to 8 miles from the center of Lodi.

Joe Remington; stated that the department claims to have a \$200,000 operating budget with \$100,000. from the levy and the village has the discretionary ability to add the rest from their general fund. He was very disappointed that no one from the village was present to even listen to this meeting. That the department has had 4 chief in the last five years and believes that the problems is political. Which is evident with their lack of attendance this evening and understands that Council was directed by the Mayor to not attend. He wants to have protection for his residents and if they have to go somewhere else to secure that, they will. This present situation scares him. He would like to see the department improve but is not confident that it can at this point.

What would be the cost associated with a contracted service from any of the groups here tonight? We need information to move forward.

Likley; We provide contracted service with the Village of Westfield Center based on their taxable evaluation from the County Auditor's Office, they then pay at the same millage rate as our residents which is 2.5 mills.

Joe Remington; had concerns of being able to split the township in four sections to split the service areas amongst the departments and the residents' concerns of the same. And if they had the funds available to do that. He also does not want to leave the residents of the Village out of these efforts.

Bill Cletzer; getting volunteers is tough and only going to get tougher. Lodi's efforts to get new volunteers he believes is too late. They need to realize the problem, that it is arrogance to not be here tonight to discuss the options to resolve this. There needs to be a way to get them to the table.

David Folk; first, he is not provide legal counsel to areas that they don't represent and recommended that each pursue counsel on their own.

WESTFIELD FIRE AND RESCUE DISTRICT

The Prosecutors office could contact the Village legal counsel as to the concerns presented tonight. He was here to gather information for Mr. Thorne and that they would want to review the mutual aid contract.

Likley; Stated, that we have to kick this back to Harrisville Township Trustees and they to Lodi Council and the Mayor, as you are providing the bulk of the funds and are not receiving the level of service that you should be. The same way that our residents would be here before our Board if they were not receiving the service. Lodi Fire and Rescue is answering the majority of their calls, we're not saying that they're not. But that doesn't help that person that is waiting 20, 30 minutes or more for someone to respond. Chief Fletcher and I would guess the other chiefs as well have offered assistance to the Lodi Chief Ridenour for training and internal department guidance.

Bill Thombs; can we calculate a per run cost that all department and chiefs can be consistent in billing and provide the service to the residents of Harrisville Township.

Chief Hall; we presently bill for transporting a patient \$450. BLS (basic life support), \$550. ALS (advance life support) and \$700. ALS 2 along with \$10.00 a mile for the transport. Their discussing the option of billing "port to port" from station, to scene, to hospital, to station.

Discussion of possible billing even if not transported, Canaan will bill \$20.00 if vitals are taken and patient signs off.

Billing does not cover the cost of operation but does assist in that funding.

Mike Costello; had requested information on Lodi, last year they had a total of 463 calls this year they're trending ahead of that, they have approximately 14 members with approximately 9 of those that are actually certified to the level that can truly function on a call. Lafayette has 42 members.

Jeff Coffey; stated that they have 40 members and their operating budget is at \$394,000. Volunteer training requirements continues to expand time and commitment for all of us.

Mike Schmidt; From the beginning of this issue he wanted to ensure that all members of Lodi Village Council were informed of the problems that we're seeing. That open communication was offered to them. The Mayor's response was they didn't think there was a problem and asked to keep this between Westfield and Lodi.

Likley; asked that Chief Fletcher get all of the chiefs together to establish a common billing rates for equipment, manpower, miles, services etc. to present to each of our entities by their first meeting in November. Each entity will need to approve the billing rates. These efforts will also include Seville Guilford Fire Chief Winkler as they are indirectly effected by having to cover our areas if we're not available due to a call in Harrisville.

Harrisville Trustees will need to identify their portion of the levy that is from the unincorporated area of the township to fully understand the resources available to them for these services.

The Prosecutors Office will communicate to Lodi Village legal counsel.

Closing comments; Canaan supportive of tonight's action and efforts.

Chief Fletcher, the main focus is service to the residents.

Chief Wright, when were toned out at #3 on the list that call has to then go through Wayne County which adds possibly 3 to 5 minutes plus our drive time of 16 to 18 minutes which is not servicing the community well.

WESTFIELD FIRE AND RESCUE DISTRICT

Joe Remington; stated his concerns about serving the residents of Lodi, that's why we're here.

Likley; the people that are at this table tonight are attempting to address that, legal counsel will communicate to them the possible options, of contracted service, district participation, or per run billing.

Thombs; Harrisville is writing the check and they should be able to get the answers from Lodi. There should be more of a response from them to sit down and talk with you.

Chief Disbrow; we thought a few years ago that soft billing would slow down some the repeat runs that we get. The ones that we're responding to several time a month. It didn't. These runs making it hard for members to continue to respond. He is having look at compensation packages for his volunteers to keep them active and bring new members in. Lodi might have to go to full time staffing.

Chief Winkler; I think everyone recognizes there is a problem.

Mike Costello; I think we're on the right track. Lafayette is a very busy department as it is now and if our call volume is going to increase as a result of removing Westfield out of the rotation it could be a huge burden on our people. So something needs to be done to address the problem.

Thombs; asked if and when this group will get together again to finalize a direction to be taken.

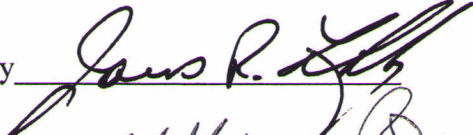
It was agreed that this group will meet again on December 4th at 7:00pm here at Westfield to discuss the next steps to take.

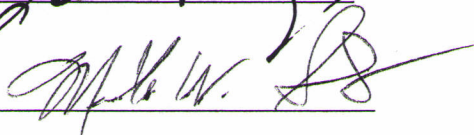
Likley made a motion adjourn the meeting 8:30pm

Schmidt seconded

Roll call unanimous

Approved date 10-6-2014

James Likley 

Mike Schmidt 

William Thombs 