

LOWELL AREA FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 8, 2017
At the Look Memorial Fire Station

1. ROLL CALL

Jim Herb called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Jim Herb, Susan Reister, Tim Wittenbach, Carlton Blough, David Pasquale and Jim Hodges. Also present: Peter Letzmann

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Herb mentioned under new business, item b, to add the item “possible payment of authority board members.”

IT WAS MOVED BY BLOUGH and seconded by REISTER to approve the agenda as corrected. Yes – all. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of the Regular meeting minutes – March 27, 2017

IT WAS MOVED BY HODGES and seconded by REISTER to approve the minutes as written. Yes – all. Motion carried.

4. FINANCIAL REPORTS. Olin reported the Fire Authority has \$251,000 in cash. She noted in the revenue/expenditure report the \$4,000 received was from Ranger Bid. Blough questioned the check written to Physio Control. Olin responded it was for the Lucas Compression units. Herb noted there were two more months to finish this fiscal year. It was also noted the July payroll will be accrued back to June.

IT WAS MOVED BY HODGES and seconded by PASQUALE to approve the financial report as presented. Yes – all. Motion carried.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comments were received.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. UPDATE ON UTV (VAN OVERBEEK) van Overbeek said the UTV is onsite if anyone would like to look after the meeting. He mentioned Soyka added diamond plating. van Overbeek added a switch grass burn was held on April 29 and three UTV’s were onsite. Herb questioned the size of the UTV water tank? van Overbeek responded 35 gallons. He said the final cost of the UTV should be right around the \$3,500 budget. Blough questioned the three units, and which one the department liked better. van Overbeek responded all three UTV’s were set up differently. He said the Alto fire department is not sure they are going to continue with the program and Cannon Township is utilizing a 6 X 6. He added each would serve the purpose, however he liked Lowell’s UTV for its functionality.

B. CONTINUATION OF FUND BALANCE DISCUSSION. Herb mentioned the fund balance topic was taken back to the respective boards to discuss. Reister said Lowell Township would like the balance held by the township either by refunding or to skip a payment. Hodges stated the City prefer the Fire Authority maintain its own money, and build it up for large equipment

purchases. He added the formula we agreed on, seems to be working well. He added the money belongs with the authority. Burns said a legal opinion was done in regard to fund balance. He said the only grant not received because of fund balance was a Fema grant. He added these grants tend to go to large municipalities. He added a 30% fund balance right now is modest Burns felt to pull the money out or miss a payment, he could never recommend that. Herb mentioned a designation for fund balance for example future equipment. Witherell mentioned to put the funds into a sinking fund or capital fund for capital apparatus replacement, then we are not sitting on a slush fund as the grantors see it. Hodges mentioned our agreement doesn't have a vehicle for refunding. Pasquale mentioned a reallocation of funds for equipment.

- C. REVIEW OF FIRE HOUSE IMPROVEMENT BIDS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS – van Overbeek. Herb requested Letzmann look into commercial lease agreements and he provided two agreements one from Michigan and one from California. Herb mentioned in the fire authority agreement, the city leased the authority the building for \$1.00 with no real tie to costs or responsibility. Burns mentioned the council is on board, ready for the June meeting regarding the fire barn agreement with the city and the authority. Herb requested Letzmann be involved. Herb questioned van Overbeek where they are with building estimates, if anything was critical to be completed. van Overbeek mentioned one door on the back side of building, is not functional and you cannot get in or out due to the jam being swollen. Herb, mentioned the bid for doors and if all three had to be done at one time. van Overbeek responded no. Wittenbach felt the contractor would prefer to do them all at once. He further questioned if the building improvements qualify for community development monies. Burns questioned if Vergennes could utilize block grant funds for a building in the City of Lowell when the city doesn't participate with block grant. Wittenbach said Vergennes already does this with the Lowell senior center.

IT WAS MOVED by BLOUGH and seconded by HODGES to repair all three station doors with Discount Door of Jenison, not to exceed \$4800. Yes all- Motion carried.

Herb questioned the bid for repairing the stucco on the building. van Overbeek said we received a bid from Mark Batchelor, he is the only one that repairs stucco. Herb requested van Overbeek get that item revisited.

- D. FIREARM CARRY POLICY. Letzmann prepared two options for firearm carry policy, one that prohibits the possession while on duty or the other to not prohibit the possession of pistols by firefighters while on duty. He mentioned Michigan law does not prohibit the employer to regulation and prohibition of pistols in the workplace. He mentioned insurance is the big question, there would be no insurance coverage by the Authority for the firefighters from claims from the misuse of the pistols. He added there are two options: One, defines what "on duty" is, the member is unable to secure on the fire or emergency calls, firefighter shall exhaust best efforts to stow in a secured and locked place. Secondly, if the firefighter is unable to safely stow the firearm, all measures to prevent mishap with the firearm. Thirdly, as soon as practical, advise the superior officer that the firefighter is in the possession of a firearm. The seconded option is not to prohibit the carrying of pistols by firefighter on duty. If the firefighter complies, regarding the possession and recognizes "on duty" assumes liability holds harmless and recognizes potential and use personal and not a requirement of firefighter duty. Don't want to create liability where we don't have liability. Prohibition with policy of the board, not to prohibit be used in a safe manner hold the board and authority harmless. van Overbeek said he would rather put up with consequences than have to go to a funeral. Witherell mentioned legislation house bill 5960 that would wave firefighters from free zones like a school or church. Letzmann said the first bullet

point addresses 5960 that states “complies with all government requirements and regulations regarding the possession and use of the pistol.” Herb suggested anyone with a concealed license, register it with the fire chief so it is on record. Letzmann said that could be added to the policy. van Overbeek mentioned along with the gun permit, proof of insurance also be provided. Reister mentioned advanced training and twice yearly testing of firearms. Letzmann said if we train, and negligent train, we want to limit our involvement. Blough suggested taking this item back to the township boards, and he would like the public to have more knowledge. Hodges mentioned his board appoints me to represent them.

IT WAS MOVED BY HODGES and seconded by WITTENBACH to approve option 2, policy not to prohibit possession of concealed pistols by firefighter on duty providing a copy of concealed weapon permit and insurance to the fire chief. Yes: Herb, Wittenbach, Pasquale and Hodges. NAY: Blough, Reister. Motion carried.

- E. GRANT STATUS. Witherell said he has applied to the Lowell Community fund grant for the replacement of a utility truck and the Look Memorial Fund, for a fire skid pump and tank system. Hodges mentioned the Look fund recently met, and the Fire department request was not granted. He added \$8000 was available, and \$4000 was granted to the Veen Observatory and \$4000 to the Boy Scouts.
- F. FURTHER DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE INSPECTION CHARGES. Herb said there is a cost for fireman to do inspections and if we do charge for inspections, should it revert back to the municipality or fire department. Wittenbach felt the inspection charges should be provided to the municipality, so they can do with what they want. Herb questioned what an average inspection charge was. Witherell responded \$25 - \$35 dollars. Wittenbach felt these should be tracked and sent to the municipalities. Herb, requested a list of the inspections and amounts be provided to Sue, once a month, so the City can disburse the reports. Herb requested a motion to put together a fee for inspections. Wittenbach said the cost should be a pass through the municipality for the cost of the inspections.

IT WAS MOVED BY Wittenbach and seconded by BLOUGH for the fire department to disburse monthly to the municipalities, the actual cost of fire inspections. Yes all. Motion carried.

- H. BIOCARE PROGRAM STATUS – van Overbeek said he is looking at the first of August for physicals to be held at the fire department and August 2, 2017 at Plainfield Township. He said two locations will be offered and that \$700 has been eliminated in travel times. Herb questioned if members were aware membership is subject to the outcome of the physical. Van Overbeek responded yes, and that a couple are apprehensive. van Overbeek said you are either fit for duty or not. He further mentioned, everyone will receive a detailed response to their physical in a sealed envelope. Wittenbach questioned if the physicals were annual. van Overbeek responded yes. He added the physicals should be completed by mid-August.
7. A. CURRENT FIRE EQUIPMENT EVALUATION. Herb mentioned fire department runs this last month were large and mainly outside of the city area with no fire hydrants. He added one truck # 6 was sitting in backup. He added the one thing Lowell is missing is a tanker and we have to rely on Alto or Cascade for a tanker. Herb mentioned truck #6 is due to be retired in two years. He felt there may be a residual value to sell early since we aren't utilizing this truck. He felt the board should optimize resale and apply toward a tanker at a much lesser cost. Van Overbeek felt there is always a need for a tanker. He added having the capability of hauling more water, also assists in ISO ratings and lowers rates for home owners. He said there are more pros than cons.

Herb questioned a ballpark number for a tanker. Witherell responded \$250,000 – \$275,000 new. Witherell stated he has submitted a spec to Fire Apparatus company out of Alabama requesting a ballpark number what the truck would be valued at if we were to sell ourselves using them as a broker, or if they come here and purchase and transport and update and resell. Herb mentioned rescue truck 10. van Overbeek stated it does serve a purpose, is a licensed medical unit. Wittenbach questioned if it was low maintenance. Van Overbeek responded yes since it is not used much. Blough suggested moving forward and put numbers together so down the road we could put apply for a grant, get numbers together. Wittenbach said he would prefer moving sooner than later. van Overbeek said that would be the best decision.

Reister asked the board if anyone was interested in getting paid for attending fire board meetings. She stated her dilemma is she works Monday afternoons and she has to give up wages to attend these meetings. Hodges stated the City Council, Planning Commission and Lowell Light and Power boards are paid by the city. Pasquale added the board of review is also paid. Wittenbach mentioned he is paid to attend as supervisor. Herb as a board, I don't know if the authority should say if its members get paid or if we should go back to the municipalities to initiate. Letzmann said the agreement states "all boardmembers should serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed." Herb suggested defer this item to the municipalities to address between now and the next meeting.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Capital appropriations
- B. Financial

9. FIRE CHIEF REPORT AND UPDATES.

Van Overbeek said in March there were 57 total incidents, 22 fire related and 35 medical. He added the department attended the Community expo and handed out applications and engine 5 was on site. He mentioned he appreciated the opportunity to present his department's presentation at city hall. Next year, he hoped a few more representatives would attend. He said for the month of April, there were 74 incidents, 31 fire and 43 medical. He said the payroll was higher due to wildland fires and structures fires take time. He added a switch grass burn was held at the Schreur's residence on the 29th and three UTV'S were put to the test. He mentioned Soyka did an amazing job, including Witherell and Donahue getting the UTV up and functional. After today, he stated he is heading to Gaylord for Lowell Light and Power business. He said he will return Wednesday May 10. He said dates for open try outs have been put together including Friday May 19 at 6 p.m. and Saturday May 20 at 8 a.m. He said there have been several hours of training including 113 last month. He added he is pleased with how things have been going.

10. MEMBER COMMENTS

Hodges apologized for using a bad metaphor earlier. Wittenbach mentioned having unused funds and allowing them to remain with the authority. Hale stated Lowell Township not against it, as long as it is a designated fund. Letzmann said the percentage to your budget is the issue. Wittenbach wants to make sure if someone discusses fund balance, there is a reason it is at this level. Herb, stated part of the budget process is looking at the sinking fund.

11. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING(s)

Herb said the next meeting will be held June 12th.

IT WAS MOVED BY PASQUALE TO adjourn at 5:25 p.m. Yes – all. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Herb, Chairman

Suzanne Olin, Recording Secretary