

Minutes of Emergency Services Committee Tour of Baldwin Township Fire Department

The Watab Emergency Services Committee met at the Watab Town Hall at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 29, 2017 to travel to the Baldwin Township Fire Department for a tour and meeting with the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief. Those from the committee participating were Ed Kacures Jr., Craig Gondeck, Todd Waytashek, Maureen Graber, and Pat Spence.

The meeting at the Fire Hall was at 9:30 a.m. with Fire Chief Scott Case and Assistant Chief Robin Foster. The Chief is a full-time City of St. Paul Firefighter with over thirty years of experience. He recently was “talked into” being the Baldwin Chief. The background of Baldwin starting their own Fire Department is like Watab’s. In 2000, an irreconcilable situation occurred with the City of Princeton over an annual payment increase, so they considered forming their own township department. Their annual operating budget is \$130,000 serving a population of 6,600 in thirty-six sections.

Conversation with Chief Case included the following points:

- Strive to have thirty firefighters. It is most difficult to recruit those available during the daytime.
- They pay \$10 per hour.
- They average 230 calls annually with 70-80% medical calls.
- They have two people on their ambulance.
- Startup equipment that he recommended was: 2 engines, 2 tenders, 1 grass rig, and a rescue vehicle (from Gold Cross).
- They have a medical unit that will be for sale this winter.
- Used tenders are the most difficult to find.
- They rebuilt a plow truck, which cost \$70,000; he didn’t recommend doing this.
- He works a twenty-four-hour shift in St. Paul, and he usually totals about fifty-six hours a week when he is working. Average service time is eleven days a month in St. Paul. When he is gone in St. Paul, he relies on his assistant and the four captains.
- The Baldwin Township Fire Department went active in 2002. Plan a year for training the personnel.
- He recommended have front and back over-head doors for drive through ease.
- He wishes the department had a hose tower for drying the hoses.
- He recommends having a training room on the main floor; theirs is on second floor. “Build a big enough building for indoor training.”
- He said there are grants for start ups.
- Plan to have your office space on the side of the building where expansion will not be possible.
- Baldwin’s well system is poor; it takes thirty minutes to fill a tender. Put in a big enough well to fill the truck in three minutes. Heavy iron in their water is a problem.
- He recommends coming off a hydrant with pipe that is twelve inches for 1,500 gallons per minute.
- The township needs to build up the pension fund to get the department off the ground.
- Pension is \$2,300 per year per person; to get pension the firefighter needs to make 33% of the annual calls each year and seventy-five percent of training sessions (two per month). At

retirement, they could receive a pension of \$50,000, which is the incentive for many of the firefighters. PERA could be used for the pension administration program.

- DNR makes matching grants of up to \$10,000 per year.
- Baldwin has two female firefighters; all need to be in good physical condition. Initially, they need to pass a physical; after that they go through an annual agility test.
- Recruiting was done through ads in the newspaper and announcements at public township meetings.
- Firefighters are paid \$10 per hour or \$30 per training. Try to recruit some experienced firefighters, and don't rely on one person.
- Baldwin has four captains paid \$12 per hour; 1 assistant paid \$13 per hour; the chief paid \$14 per hour.
- Sherburne County does the paging; all firefighters have a pager; location is done by phone.
- He recommended setting up a fire district with a separate levy, so taxing for fire protection is a separate item on people's tax statements.
- The Chief does not like the overall design of their building. There are a lot of small rooms; the day room doesn't have a conference table for meetings; the training room is too small and has poor air circulation; bathrooms are on outside walls so urinals freeze in the winter.
- They have two engines: one is eight years old, and the other is sixteen years old. The engines were equipped with air bottles, generators, saw, junkyard blade, metal blade, extrication equipment (jaws, cutter, inflatables), stabilization equipment, gas fan, water, blankets, non-sparking equipment for gas emergencies, and hose appliances. Each rig has 600 feet of large-diameter hose, 600 feet of 2-inch hose, and 600 feet of 1 ¼ " line. Used is available.
- Their ISO rating is seven and depends on good water sources. They would have a higher rating if they had hydrants. You need a hose clamp to go from ISO 8 to 7. He really emphasized that ISO is BIG ON HAVING WATER.
- Each set of gear costs about \$3,000.
- He recommends having an extractor for cleaning gear; they do not have one.
- Their new grass rig cost \$89,000 and holds five hundred gallons. They fill their own air tanks and have an electric pump for hose testing.
- Having an outside training area is important.
- Keep firefighters' gear off the floor; keep all fixtures off the floor for ease in cleaning.
- Eye wash station is mandatory.
- Storage upstairs included backup equipment, radio room, and storage space for the relief association.
- Fund raisers include an August dance and raffle and a garage sale.
- For public relations, they give two \$500 high school graduation scholarships.
- Medical personnel now are EMR's; he is encouraging them to become EMT's. They have three plus the assistant chief who is a medical doctor on their medical team. There is a grant from Central Minnesota Emergency Services for training, and Gold Cross offers training.
- We toured the building, and Maureen took pictures of all the rooms and the equipment.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence