

Minutes of the 9:00 A.M. Emergency Services Information Meeting

The first of two information sessions on potential alternatives to the current fire contracts with the City of Sauk Rapids and City of Rice for Emergency Services delivery in Watab Township was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Craig Gondeck at the Watab Town Hall. Following the welcome and Pledge to the Flag, the meeting was turned over to Emergency Services Committee Chairman and Town Board Supervisor Todd Waytashek. Board members present were Chairman Craig Gondeck, Supervisors Todd Waytashek and Lloyd Erdmann, Treasurer Maureen Graber, and Clerk Pat Spence. Additional committee members present were Bob Raveling, Dick Raveling, and John Olson. Seventeen audience members who are also residents were Daniel Olmschenk, Robert Rahn, Ray Schlichting, Donna Salmonson, Doug and Deb Harden, Julie and Kevin Johnson, Guy Spence, Delroy Rothstein, Ray Thompson, Kathleen Carlson, Arvo Tanner, Betty Murphy, Terry Knapke, Keith Krueger, and Karsten Braaten. Guests present were Ross Olson, Sauk Rapids City Administrator, Jason Fleming, Sauk Rapids Fire Chief, and Tony Hommerding, retired Fire Chief from Sauk Rapids.

Todd explained that the town board tried to negotiate with the City of Rice between the months of late November, when we received a contract proposal, and the end of March. None of the township requests were granted. The township especially wanted to stop medical first responder calls by Rice because it is redundant service. At the March Annual meeting, the township voters voted unanimously to have the board form a committee to study other options. The committee was formed with the town board members and Jason Krueger, John Olson, Ed Kacures, Dick Raveling, and Bob Raveling. They have been meeting regularly since May.

Supervisor Todd Waytashek gave a Power Point presentation, which is attached to these minutes. (Should we include them?) He thanked Negen Architects for giving Watab the plans for the Chain of Lakes Department and the rough estimates for current construction costs. They did this at no cost to the township.

There was considerable input from audience members:

- The township should not wait to approach the City of Sauk Rapids about becoming a sub-station. Next steps should include contacting them. Other residents also expressed that this should be pursued as soon as possible.
- The question was asked if there would be a formal vote of all the township residents on whether to form a fire department. The response was that the committee is seeking input from residents through a survey that is being distributed at the end of the information meetings on whether to move forward with the process of forming a department. The committee is not recommending a formal vote, since a ballot question couldn't be voted on until March 2019.
- Two residents made statements that they would prefer an opportunity to vote on forming a fire department. One would like the chance to vote on becoming a sub-station or having a township fire department.

- Ross Olson, Sauk Rapids City Administrator, and Jason Fleming, Fire Chief, were present and stated that they were interested in hearing the presentation. They said, “We have zero problem with the City sitting down with the Township to discuss becoming a sub-station and appreciate the positive comments about the relationship with us.”
- One resident felt the survey should have more options on it and did not like the wording of the question, “Should Watab Township continue the process to form a fire department?” She felt the committee was asking the wrong question.
- Another resident felt the survey should not give so many options. He felt that the survey was a way for the committee to get further direction from the residents.
- At the evening presentation, Todd should emphasize that the structural steel bonding numbers as presented are for a ten-year bond versus the fifteen-year bonds for the pole building and concrete building.

Surveys were distributed to all the township residents present and collected as they left the meeting. Of the twenty-five residents present, twenty-one surveys were returned. The results of the survey were as follows:

Should Watab Township continue the process to form a fire department? 21 surveys were returned. 13 – Yes; 6 – No; 1 – neither Yes nor No at this time; and 1 put a “?” in the Yes blank and added “or substation.”

Input on type of building preferred was: Pole Building – 2; Steel – 1; Steel or concrete – 1; Wood construction – 1; Concrete – 9. The person who wrote a “?” in the “Yes” blank also added a box and wrote in “Wood construction.”

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence