

Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee
April 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes
Walworth County Government Center, County Board Room 114
100 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin

The meeting was called to order at 1.00 p.m. by Dale Wilson.

Roll call was conducted, and a quorum of members was present: James Weiss, Denise Pieroni, Bruce Vander Veen, and Chair Dale Wilson. A quorum was declared.

County Administrator David Bretl, Captain Jamie Green, and Chief Rod Smith were also in attendance.

Weiss made a motion, seconded by Vander Veen, to approve the agenda as amended with the request to move 8c to after public comment. Motion carried 4-0.

Wilson made a motion, seconded by Vander Veen, to approve the February 15, 2018 meeting minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public comment period– none

- Discussion regarding progress of the study committee and form and timing of final recommendations.

David Bretl discussed the progression of the committee over the past year and the time to start developing some tangible recommendations is approaching. He states he does not think the committee is going to solve all of the problems expressed by departments and governmental bodies, but one of the values the EMS Committee can bring is to offer recommendations to the communities about how to fix or address these issues. He continued with stating the committee has talked about dispatch and the idea of a consolidated dispatch center, but the action of making it happen will not happen for a while. When county decision makers review that issue however, the committee's input would be considered. Another example of this approach includes the committee making recommendations regarding the level of resources that need to be devoted to fire and EMS. This might be useful to a community facing a referendum. He distributed a draft document that would include a list of summarized recommendations from the committee with the survey data included as an appendix.

Pieroni stated that she felt the committee still has a lot of gaps including the perspective of private agencies, the reliance of communities on those agencies, and a possible role the county could have in terms of providing higher levels of service. She also stated by looking at the survey results the committee could provide different models with background and case studies that people can look at to get an idea of which would suite their situation the best. Bretl stated looking at the dispatch was a worthwhile exercise, the privates is a topic that should be looked into further, and figuring out if the county has a role at providing ALS should be pursued. Wilson agreed that the survey results should be included in the document; Vander Veen added

that some of the answers and key points will have to be summarized and there are gaps between what fire chiefs and municipalities see as a problem. Weiss stated that when the committee was put together it was a great idea, common ground was made, but there has not been much progress from that time. He continued there the lack of support and interest from communities and departments for this effort may be because the committee's focus is too wide. He suggested that maybe the EMS route is the route to focus on. Wilson added that EMS is the majority of the call volume. Pieroni agreed and stated EMS has higher level of training requirements and the committee should focus on that kind of consolidations and a model for the county to provide assistance.

Bretl recommended a living document approach meaning, by the end of each future meeting, the committee adds a recommendation to the list. Pieroni thinks doing some kind of public survey or brochure to the public is important because people expect a service but do not actually understand it and how it functions. **Vander Veen made a motion, seconded by Pieroni, to add a consolidated-unified dispatch as the first item on the draft recommendations list. Motion carried.**

Unfinished Business

- Letter updating departments on the progress of the study.

A draft letter was handed out to committee members. This letter would be delivered to all the participants who completed the survey to inform them of the direction the committee is headed. Pieroni suggested drafting an additional or adjusting the current letter so that it can be sent out to those parties who did not participate also because the committee could be recommending things that could impact them. It was agreed to change the second area of focus to read as follows: Explore alternative staffing models. **Vander Veen made a motion, seconded by Pieroni, to recommend a modification of the letter in order to be delivered to both parties. Motion carried.**

- Modification of membership and role of 9-1-1 governing board.

Bretl stated the 9-1-1 governing board met with Chief Tim O'Neill, chair of the board and it appears the mandate of the board is not clear in everybody's mind. O'Neill agreed the board could be given a new charge, membership, and name; could be an interim step towards the committee's goal of a consolidated dispatch. By creating a board with fire, police, and EMS representatives from departments could help the run the operation similar to how the Rock County Dispatch Center functions. Bretl would like to move forward with this action and noted some ordinances would need to be updated. Captain Jamie Green, assistant chair of the 9-1-1 governing board spoke about changing the make-up of the board and stated having some direction for the committee would be beneficial to get the membership back involved. Wilson stated it was recommended at the last meeting for the board membership to be re-examined and he would like to place that recommendation on the draft recommendations list because the necessary direction for the person in charge of the committee is needed from a collective body to help drive consistency.

Pieroni questioned if this is an independent recommendation or are there other items to consider such as GPS. Vander Veen clarified they are talking about the formation and function of the board. He stated the change of membership will help bring a better focal point to the committee for a more consistent product. Green stated the attendance for MABAS meetings depends on the location of the meeting. The county EMS committee meeting is sparsely attended based on their 18 agencies; there is not a lot of representation at those meetings. By having two EMS, two fire, and two law enforcement members on the committee it gives those agencies a direction of having someone to go to that will bring the issues to the committee and provide feedback to that governing body.

Bretl stated currently there are a wide variety of people on the current 911 Committee. The goal is to mandate or strongly encourage protocols; current membership is unlikely to make that happen. Wilson agreed that the board would advise what protocol would work for the collective group that is represented by that body and advise the communications captain on what would work best for those represented there. It was agreed the function of the board would include: advising the sheriff regarding protocols, technology, and customer service. Customer service would include standardized training; current training includes APCO courses. Wilson stated members should not only represent the body or department in which the member was chosen to represent. Vander Veen stated the EMS representatives have to be licensed EMTs so the EMS division is properly represented rather than having a fire chief that has both qualifications. Bretl questioned who would nominate members. Vander Veen answered MABAS could provide candidates for both fire and EMS. **Wilson made a motion, seconded by Pieroni, to add on the draft recommendations list the recommendation to direct county staff to redo the charter of the 9-1-1 governing board including but not limited to: specifically identify the membership as described in the last Fire/EMS Study Committee meeting; identify their mission as being to review protocols; to make recommendations to the communications captain; to provide input and guidance; to support the necessary functions of the communications center; and, to have universal protocol . Motion carried.**

The representation of each PSAP on a committee was discussed. Green said there is a trend nationwide to consolidate dispatch centers so there is a primary and a backup in each county. This avoids excess PSAPs. Pieroni stated if this group is potentially going to also participate in a transition, buy-in might be really important from that perspective and if there are protocols, should the committee be encouraging them for all PSAPs. Wilson stated that having the membership count too large will make the board inefficient. Green clarified that in the previous meeting it was recommended to have the board consist of two fire departments, two EMS, two law enforcement, the county EMS medical directors, and chair of MABAS 103; the addition of a representative from the other three PSAPs would increase the membership count to 12. Wilson stated to encourage the board to be between nine and twelve members with the understanding that the goal is to have all PSAPs represented.

New Business

- Discussion regarding the role of GPS/ Pro Phoenix in improving response times. Green stated that at the MABAS 103 meeting it was announced that Lake Geneva Fire Department was going to put together a presentation for chiefs at an upcoming meeting

concerning the GPS/Pro Phoenix system. The Walworth County Sheriff's Office is willing to host the servers if enough fire agencies are willing to buy-in. The fire module is separate from the law enforcement module. The GPS system was briefly discussed and the ways it could be used such as having the GPS active on squads so dispatch can see where they are located. At the previous EMD meeting, it was discussed about having the GPS into the privates' rigs as well, but it was unsure if that was possible to enforce. Bretl clarified the county bought Pro Phoenix for CAD and a law enforcement records management system. All the municipal units that are on the system can be seen. Green stated that all of the agencies except Village of Bloomfield has purchased a license and is on the records management system. Green stated that the fire version of this system is everything the police have but with the fire RMS. Vander Veen stated departments are already paying fees for different software for reports, training, and inventory, but this program brings it all together. Pieroni stated Delavan recently transitioned to Pro Phoenix and the whole system was just under \$150,000 for police only; however, they already had the notebooks necessary for the system. Green stated it was mentioned that the licensing fee was \$1,900 per unit that is put on the system.

Bretl questioned if there was an option to only place it in ambulances. Green replied yes but his guess is the more units you put on it, the cheaper it becomes per unit. Bruce stated the real benefit in GPS falls into EMS; fire units usually stay within their response area whereas ambulances are constantly going everywhere. Bretl suggested the system might not be as valuable on fire trucks but it is on ambulances, yet there still needs to be some protocol or agreement among EMS departments and agencies. Pieroni clarified that every department is still relying on privates for some level of care and the privates would have to buy-in to the system or the protocol would be that, that agency would not be called because dispatch would not know where that agency's vehicle is located. Green stated that from a business stand point the privates would be willing to spend the licensing fees, but it is up to the independent agencies to get the equipment. Vander Veen stated a problem is that their rigs are always moving so the same ambulances are not always in the area; however, if the privates are on the system time is not lost calling agencies because dispatch can see which is the closest rig/who is available. Pieroni commented until there is a commitment to be county-wide, the system does not provide much benefit. Green said he would reach out to Pro Phoenix and get a cost estimate for the servers and licensing fees for possibly 13 ambulances. **Pieroni made a motion, seconded by Weiss, to add to the draft recommendations list the recommendation of GPS on ambulances with the adoption of protocols. Motion carried.**

- Discussion regarding public survey.
Committee agreed to put this topic on hold for future meeting.

- Potential inclusion of ideal everyday response times in final recommendations.
Bretl questioned if it was possible to define best practices and does it have value to chiefs or elected officials. If so, the topic could be an appendix to recommendations document. Pieroni thinks response time is related to the geographic area, but there is also the term of being out the door; some people live further so they should know it is going to take longer for service to arrive. Weiss thinks it has a value but not sure how you quantify it with all the variables.

Wilson stated Dr. Andrews forwarded him the NFPA standard for response times and he thinks if a chief wants to make a case for more staff or resources from the municipality, he/she has the viable information to support the case. Vander Veen commented on the tiered response system with police that have some paramedic training who on the scene 90% of the time within minutes. He continued that it is up to the communities to spend the money to make staffing changes to alter response times. Bretl questioned how do elected officials know if they are providing adequate service or not; what case do you make to the taxpayers. Pieroni stated that it is important to educate residents and not necessarily make a standard, but response times could help evaluate protocol and direction.

Chief Rod Smith of the Elkhorn Area Fire Department stated the referendums he has looked at include numbers that he does not think make a difference on our specific area and evaluating something the committee does not have a lot of control over is a waste of time. Weiss stated that the county has diverse communities and thinks elected officials should have some kind of expectation and understanding depending on where they live. Smith stated that every department has the data that you could match up against the national average. Bretl asked if they wanted to consider any kind of recommendation or finding on that having first responder training is an integral part of this. Bruce recommended having deputies and police receive first responder training in order to be able to at least assess the patient. Green stated that first responders is one of the basic training of the law enforcement and that the Sheriff's Office has a policy that they respond to every EMS call to at least assess. Bretl suggested getting more specific on the next agenda and talk about that one of the recommendations is with volunteers departments, that law enforcement takes on an important role and the recommendation that they be first responders and respond to rescue calls and be equipped. Pieroni commented that it should not be limited to volunteer departments. It was agreed to add topic for further discussion to the next agenda.

Public comment period- Smith stated that he would like to committee to study financing options harder. He suggested getting the municipalities and county together to lobby against the state to change the two percent levy cap; that is the only viable way to support fire and EMS. Vander Veen questioned if it would be beneficial for someone to explain to municipalities how to have a successful referendum and advertise it. Bretl suggested adding finance-levy cap referendums on the next agenda. Wilson also suggested adding to a future agenda discussing county involvement in ALS service. Wilson's concern with private agencies is they are in it for business and that is going to drive who they serve. Pieroni stated that county could also contract with privates and provide incentives to make sure the privates are obligated to take calls within the county boundaries. Weiss stated his understanding was that the surveys showed people wanted to work more efficiently and thinks the committee should find more solutions. The solution may include needing financing but at least there will be reasoning behind it. Smith stated the problem with using other department's resources is if they are doing someone else's call and they cannot charge for it, they are not going to like that. Weiss thinks that is something that needs to be addressed county-wide; is everyone going to charge or establish a common fee schedule.

Smith stated that the financial part is one of the easiest things to fix, but staffing is a real issue. Compared to last year's technical college system, the enrollment for fire/EMS classes decreased 50% from the year before. If it continues there will be a bidding war for filling positions; the pay scale is so low. Bretl stated there should be clarification on the billing process when calls are taken by other municipalities. He also suggested adding the discussion of staffing models as a topic for a future agenda.

Confirmation of next meeting date and time: May 10, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.

Adjournment

On motion by Weiss, seconded by Vander Veen, Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 2.58 p.m.

Submitted by Emily Haas, Administrative Assistant. Meeting minutes are not considered final until approved by the committee at the next regularly scheduled meeting.