

Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee
July 19, 2018 Meeting Minutes
County Board Room 114, Walworth County Government Center
100 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dale Wilson at 1:07 p.m.

Roll call was conducted and a quorum of members was present: Chair Dale Wilson, Vice Chair John Peters, Denise Pieroni, and Bruce Vander Veen. Dave Nelson, Lowell Hagen, and James Weiss were absent.

Others present: Dr. Steven Andrews-Aurora Health Care; Dr. James MacNeal-Mercy Health; Walworth County Administrator David Bretl; County Board Chair Nancy Russell; Chris Schultz, Lake Geneva Regional News

Bruce Vander Veen made a motion, seconded by Vice Chair John Peters, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

Vice Chair Peters made a motion, seconded by Bruce Vander Veen, to approve the May 10, 2018 meeting minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public comment – There was none.

Unfinished Business

- Update on the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee

County Administrator David Bretl stated this Committee needs to make appointments and schedule a meeting for late September or October. From MABAS Division 103, Vice Chair Peters stated he can give recommendations for appointments to Bretl. Bretl will forward the resolution regarding membership to Peters and the recommendations will go to the County Board for approval.

New Business

- Billing between municipalities for services

Discussion ensued regarding billing between municipalities for services when other agencies cover calls, and how billing works. Peters said there is currently conversation about an EMS response plan that would fill some of the gaps in the departments and allow for them to have at least a couple agencies assigned as backup. It was discussed at the last EMS Committee meeting and at the Division 103 meeting. Dr. MacNeal added some agencies only have one or two backup agencies for ALS or mutual aid. Peters stated ALS availability is not the major issue. MacNeal disagreed, stating ALS can always fulfill the need for BLS, but BLS can never fill the need for ALS. He added a countywide system would have to be ALS. He stated that local agencies could be a backup for a countywide system for BLS calls, but there is a lack of effort put into EMS in general. Walworth County has ten ladder trucks but Lake Geneva is the only municipally-staffed Paramedic service. Peters stated it has been discussed at Division 103 that EMS needs to be a stronger part in the organization. Dispatchers have an unnecessary amount of stress added to their jobs by the lack of communication across municipalities in Walworth County. Chair Wilson added the County cannot make a recommendation for which municipality bills for calls until we have a plan in place. Peters agreed, adding we need a unilateral sign of support from this Committee, the chiefs, and physicians to get the organization and rules established. MacNeal reminded the Committee of the Rock County model, with a policy that has automatic Mutual Aid dispatching. It needs to be a dispatcher-driven response plan. Bretl added this group needs to make a recommendation as to how long response times should be and how many agencies deep the standard is and submit it to the Sheriff. Wilson agreed this group should make a recommendation to the Sheriff and the Advisory Committee so they can standardize and provide guidelines. Peters added the dispatch center should have a voice in the process as well. Discussion followed regarding how this Committee should proceed in developing recommendations regarding billing issues. Wilson said the topic of billing can be addressed at a later time, but it is up the municipality to bill or not, regardless of this Committee's recommendation. Vander Veen commented it would be hard to have a countywide agreement because the municipalities have different policies.

- Staffing models for fire and EMS departments

Discussion ensued regarding who should be responsible for providing staffing models. Wilson asked if this Committee would recommend a specific model. Dr. MacNeal stated if the County is not paying for departments' service, then it is not feasible for the County to dictate staffing. Bretl noted it could be the responsibility of this Committee to provide guidelines for what a service should provide; or municipalities could go with a referendum if they chose. Pieroni suggested the county could provide support for ALS calls, allowing municipalities to operate on their own, but also providing umbrella coverage for ALS service. Bretl added it is important for this Committee to focus on what the process should be and asked if there were any general statements this Committee could make for recommendations. Dr. MacNeal responded the Committee could provide a standard of adequate staffing. Peters suggested that each agency assess their major issues. He added shared services should be encouraged, as well as partnerships between departments. Discussion ensued regarding how to develop a listing of standards and an assessment that could be used to create a work group among departments, and the possibility of using outside resources to accomplish this. Bretl reminded the Committee of the remaining funds that could be used to do a study of urban and rural communities. Wilson suggested using a beta department to go through the process so other departments can review the results. Vander Veen added we could provide three options for departments to look at, allowing them to choose from those options. MacNeal expressed concern that the departments who will embrace what we come up with are most likely the ones coming to meetings already, while the departments with a problem could continue to ignore it. He suggested there needs to be some kind of comprehensive countywide ALS plan and it is better to spend funds on coming up with plans for a dispatch center, plans to provide two or three departments as backup, and how to get poor performing departments to step up. Pieroni suggested starting to address the problems with the dispatch centers to get a better idea of where the problem areas are. Peters added one way to address what the Committee has discussed would be to send a summary report of dispatch information and times to fire chiefs and community leaders and set guidelines for how many minutes each step should be. Vander Veen stated the Committee is on the right track with a dispatch center and MacNeal agreed, adding having a standard way of doing things across the county makes sense. The communities in Walworth County are more similar than they are different, and a set of standards would make implementation easier. Andrews stated it would be helpful for the dispatch center to provide monthly reports on response times. Bretl stated the County would like monthly reports as well so problem areas can be identified. MacNeal stated the response times are public record and media could easily put in a request for them. **Bretl stated a monthly report of response times should be a goal for this group. Wilson stated this could be a recommendation from this Committee.** Discussion then took place regarding the possibility of hiring a consultant. Bretl inquired of Vander Veen about the current collaborative group he is working with. Vander Veen stated the group is called the Southwestern Walworth County Fire/EMS Working Group, and consists of: Town of Sharon, Village of Sharon, Town of Walworth, Village of Walworth, Town of Delavan, City of Delavan, Town of Darien, and Village of Darien. He added the Town of Richmond may join as well. Bretl stated if there was success with that, it could be a model of a solution. Vander Veen stated all municipalities were represented and will meet again in August. He welcomed help for the collaborative group. Pieroni added sometimes it is easier to have a third party unrelated to a specific organization that can guide the process. Vander Veen offered the relationship between Whitewater and La Grange as an example for possible solutions within regions of the county. Wilson agreed that if this group were successful, it could solve the problem in a large portion of the County and provide a tangible solution to this Committee for the remainder of the County. Discussion continued regarding creating a tangible model rather than putting resources into a survey. Vander Veen and Peters agreed to find someone to assist with this process.

- Additions, deletions or edits to Committee Recommendations document

Wilson found one area that needed clarification on page 1, section 3A: "responsible for," and suggested the addition of "emergency services dispatch." to the end of the sentence. Pieroni inquired if someone with the county who has a lot experience with dispatch could work with this Committee. Bretl and Wilson agreed to meet with someone with this knowledge. Bretl questioned whether section "B" in the recommendations should

be a subset of “A” and then possibly create possible multiple subsets. Pieroni inquired whether both “B” and “C” should be under “A,” and Bretl noted that “C” should most likely be separate even if there was one dispatch. Discussion ensued regarding standards as far as PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Point) and what the optimal requirements would be if possible. Vander Veen suggested providing a guideline for PSAPs. He added the Sheriff needs support from the County, including administration, to back up said guidelines. Peters stated in Lake Geneva there are time limits and then eventually the call goes automatically to the next available township. He added the rules need to be the same for every municipality. Wilson, Pieroni, and Vander Veen agreed “A” is a long-term goal and should be kept separate. Bretl summarized: “A” is long-term, “B” is what we are doing until then, and “C” would be a unified dispatch protocol for all PSAPs. Wilson added guidelines should dictate how many layers deep an organization needs to identify for mutual aid, as well as response times before the PSAP would move onto the next appropriate agency. Bretl stated if we give guidelines, then municipalities know what we are expecting and it is up to them to follow said guidelines. Vander Veen said Rock County Advisory Committee would possibly have suggestions and he will contact them to get an idea of their guidelines. Pieroni added it is important not to lose what is brought up in this meeting and Bretl agreed, stating the focus should be a change in language before the next meeting. He inquired if there is a monthly report that we should include from all four PSAPs as far as response times. Wilson said this report should go to the Advisory Committee as well. Dr. Andrews said the Waukesha County Fire/EMS Study came out this month and their first order of priority was best practices regarding dispatching. Pieroni suggested a copy of this report be reviewed by this Committee. Andrews said the report is on their website. Peters suggested a report that provides report number, date, call for service, average response times, along with benchmark times from dispatch. He said there is a report like this from ProPhoenix called “Instant Response Time Analysis.” Peters said he would send a copy of the report to the Committee members. Wilson added a good recommendation from this Committee would be to review statistics and have every agency do its own self-evaluations as a “Best Practice.” **Wilson made a motion, seconded by Pieroni, to add a recommendation that states: “Direct every agency to assess their response statistics and ability to meet the NFPA response standards. Assessment should identify their strengths and opportunities and be shared with their leadership and local elected officials.” Motion carried 4-0.** Pieroni suggested including the NFPA standards in the appendix. Wilson said recommendations will be discussed at the next meeting. Pieroni inquired whether this Committee should expand section “E.” Peters responded that the Sheriff’s Office said they would host those on the server and this is still in progress. Pieroni asked if “E” could be rephrased to firm up what the costs would be. Discussion ensued regarding using ProPhoenix more effectively for countywide use rather than independently and possible recommendations regarding this issue. Pieroni requested this Committee work on the wording of “E” to explain why it is a recommendation with supporting information, such as a justification statement. Wilson inquired if there were any further recommendations for this report and said he will work on rephrasing the recommendations document. **Pieroni made a motion, seconded by Vander Veen, to approve all changes as discussed. Motion passed 4-0.**

Public comment – County Board Chair Nancy Russell suggested the Committee make recommendations soon, as the best outcome often comes from a local group rather than from the State. She encouraged the Committee to move forward and to get the Advisory Committee engaged. She commended all members for their work this far.

Next meeting date and time: The next meeting was confirmed for Thursday August 30, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. in County Board Room 114 at the Walworth County Government Center.

Adjournment

On motion by Vander Veen, seconded by Pieroni, Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.